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Hearing Their Voices:

The Lived Experiences & Sacrifices of African-American & Latino

Males in the Boarding School Environment

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Males in the Boarding School Environment

by

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Treatise

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Dedication

In memory of my loving mother,

Onessa C. Hodge

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Abstract

Hearing Their Voices:

The Lived Experiences & Sacrifices of African American & Latino

Males in the Boarding School Environment

by

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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Non-profit organizations like A Better Chance (ABC) have changed the trajectory of the lives of its students and their families. Over 14,000 students over the past fifty years have been granted access to a higher quality of education with greater opportunities to increase their social capital and social networking on their way to quality post-secondary educational tracks. But as the saying goes, “*there is no such thing as a free lunch*”. The levels of achievement obtained by these students come at a great personal sacrifice. Students choose to leave home as early as age thirteen. They spend the majority of the formative years in environments that are very foreign to them surrounded by people whose assumptions about life are very different from theirs. The partial separation of the students from their home environment along with the partial integration

into their boarding school environment could result in their feeling marginalized in both environments (Cookson and Persell, 1991).

This study examined the lived experiences of African American and Latino males in the boarding school environment. A phenomenological approach was used to capture the lived experiences of the participants. Questions surrounding race, identity development, social capital, displacement, and resilience were addressed. This study explored how these matters intersect in the study subjects' lived experiences.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences (the first-hand accounts and impressions of living as a member of a group) of African American and Latino males in elite boarding schools. Elite boarding schools were established in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century to educate the sons (and eventually the daughters) of the wealthy New England families. A stereotypical view of traditional boarding schools is one where unruly children are sent away. Elite boarding schools, on the other hand, separate children of the wealthy class from children of other classes. The goal of these institutions was to separate and educate the wealthy to give them better access to elite colleges and universities. For many years these institutions predominantly segregated students by race and class. This restricted admissions policy began to shift from elitism towards some inclusion in 1963.

The national, non-profit talent search organization, A Better Chance (ABC) was founded in 1963. The organization was established in response to the call to action by President John F. Kennedy. The country was dealing with issues of equality and civil rights. The goal was to establish equal access to some of the nation's most elite schools. Located mostly in New England, the ABC organization started with 23 independent schools with a grant from the Charles E. Merrill Foundation (History of A Better Chance, n.d.). The first class of students consisted of fifty young men completing a summer program on the campus of Dartmouth College. ABC's mission is to place high achieving minority students in some of the most elite secondary schools in the country.

Milton Academy can serve as an example of an elite boarding school. Founded in 1789 in Milton, Massachusetts, the school offers K-12 education with a boarding

option for students in grades nine to twelve. Boarded students live in one of the eight residence halls, separated by gender, along with faculty and staff from the school. Today, Milton has a student to faculty ratio of 5:1 and a total upper school enrollment of 695 students (grades 9-12). The annual tuition for a boarding student is \$51,330. Notable alumni include Robert & Ted Kennedy, T.S. Eliot, James Taylor, and Duval Patrick (Milton FAQs, n.d). Attendance at and graduation from this type of elite boarding school by underserved students allows the students three to four years of interactions with the classmates from exclusive upbringings and backgrounds Having graduated from elite schools such as Exeter, Andover, Milton, and St. Paul's, these previously underrepresented students had the ability to gain admittance to some of the nation's most elite colleges and universities. Students who probably would otherwise not have the access or opportunity to attend a quality post-secondary school would now have the chance to gain access to universities such as Harvard, Princeton, Columbia, & Yale. In addition, such an undergraduate education might lead to opportunities to attend law school, medical school, business school and the like.

Background Information

Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (1991; 2003) wrote several books focused on the subject of the boarding school experience. Two of those texts, *Blacks in the white establishment: a study of race and class in America* (1991) and *Blacks in the white elite: will the progress continue?* (2003) focused on the minority student experience with a concentration on students who participated in the ABC program. The authors highlight the ABC program's early years, discussing the issues and struggles students faced as being a part of an attempt to create a group of "new elite individuals" (Zweigenhaft &

Domhoff, 1991, p. 10). This new class of elite minority students would be the foundation for a new category of students; one that would be propelled above their public school peers with greater access to elite education and connections.

When reviewing the original establishment of elite boarding schools, it is important to understand that they were not designed to be an inclusive springboard into the upper echelons of American society. They were created as a way of separating and excluding (Levine, 1980). When an institution has been created with the intent of separation, a policy to begin to admit those who were previously unwelcome must be done with great thought and care. Otherwise, the new group of students will not be able to gain the full benefits of the educational experience or the results of enhanced social capital.

As of 2013, ABC has placed more than 14,000 students in 311 different elite schools in twenty-eight states. Over 90% of ABC graduating seniors immediately enroll in college. The program is 67% African American, 17% Hispanic/Latino, and 6% Asian. According to ABC, over half of the 2010 incoming scholars' families make less than the national household median income, and 44% come from single-parent homes (ABC Annual Reports 2010-2014). ABC and similar organizations have selected some of the best and the brightest from the ranks of the nation's underserved.

The remainder of Chapter I contains the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, a brief overview of the methodology, a definition of terms, delimitations and limitations, assumptions, and a summary.

Statement of the Problem

ABC and similar non-profit organizations have changed the trajectory of the lives

of their students and their students' families. Thousands of students over the past fifty years have been granted access to a higher quality of education with greater opportunities to increase their social capital and social networking on their way to quality post-secondary educational tracks. But as the saying goes, "*there is no such thing as a free lunch.*" Based on research to date, these students' achievements come at a great personal sacrifice. They often leave their homes at as early an age as thirteen, spend the majority of their formative years in environments foreign to them, and live surrounded by people who are from very different backgrounds. Additionally, partial separation from their home environment coupled with the partial integration into their boarding school environment can result in the feeling of marginalization in both environments (Cookson & Persell, 1985, 1991). Bass (2007; 2014) reviews the intersection of boarding schools and social capital; DeCuir-Gunby, Martin and Cooper (2011) issues concerning parents, and school influences on the racial identity of students attending independent schools. Unfortunately, the previous research lacks any rich discussion about the benefits gained via social capital, the personal challenges surrounding identity development, and the struggles encountered due to displacement. This study is designed to address these topics.

Prior research conducted by Cookson and Persell (1985), and Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (1991, 2003) appears to be both broad in the researchers' approach and limited in its scope. Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2003) did make an attempt to revisit their initial study, but, in doing so, they were looking at the same set of participants. The new information that they added dealt with the children of the participants as opposed to the next generation of participants. With a program of this nature, it is important to conduct

an in depth study every ten to fifteen years.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of African American and Latino male graduates of elite boarding schools. This specific cohort of males successfully navigated the boarding school environment and went on to successfully complete their undergraduate degrees between the years of 1991 and 1997.

A phenomenological approach was used to capture the lived experiences of the participants. A critical race theory (CRT) lens was used to view this project. Critical theory ontology states that reality is subjective and can be clouded by “oppressive social structures” (Mertens, 2009). Questions surrounding race, identity development, social capital, displacement, and resilience are analyzed through a CRT lens (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This study seeks to explore how these matters intersect in the study subjects’ lived experiences.

Research Questions

The study looked to answer the following questions:

1. How do African American and Latino graduates of boarding schools describe their boarding school experiences?
2. What factors do boarding school graduates perceive as contributing to their success?

Significance of the Study

The findings from this study will have both practical and theoretical significance. Organizations like ABC and their partner institutions will be able to use this study’s conclusions to better understand the challenges their student population faces during their

time away from home, and to determine how to best allocate resources to help students achieve their goals. This study also contributes to the ongoing discussion in the literature on how to assist underperforming African American and Latino males seeking secondary and post-secondary educational success. This study reveals key insights into success strategies used by this population of African American and Latino males when negotiating the educational waters. By looking at the factors to which this population attributes their own successes, institutions and organizations may have a better understanding of where to allocate resources. With this understanding, the next generation of African American and Latino males, whether educated at boarding school, public school, Ivy League or community college, may follow a path that works better for them than it did for those who traveled the path in prior generations.

Methodology

This qualitative study used the phenomenological approach. Hays and Singh (2011) describe the purpose of phenomenological research as finding “the meaning or essence of participants’ lived experiences” (p. 50). This fits well with the conceptual framework that has been laid out. The heuristic tradition is added in order to understand the “intense experience of the human condition” influenced by a phenomenon that has “personal significance to the researchers involved” (p. 52).

This study employed criterion and snowball sampling. Criterion sampling is the best method because of the very specific make-up of the sample population. Criterion sampling is defined as gathering “sample participants who are selected because they meet an important, predetermined criterion” (Hays & Singh, 2011, p. 170). The targeted group was African American and Latino males who started their secondary education at a

boarding school and completed their post-secondary education at a four-year college. Once an initial pool of qualified participants was established, the researcher was able to use that group's contacts to snowball into a larger pool of qualified participants. Data was collected via survey and semi-structured individual interviews. The study surveyed a minimum of fifteen participants. After the completion of the survey process, interviews were conducted with a minimum of eight participants. Data from the interviews was transcribed using a professional transcription service. The data was coded to indicate the inclusion of themes from the literature. Through the process of analytic induction and member checking, the researcher developed themes and codes that were used in analyzing the data from the surveys as well as the interviews (Hayes & Singh, 2011). Analytic induction is defined as the "the process by which qualitative data analysis moves from exploratory to confirmatory" (p. 307).

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions were used:

A Better Chance (ABC) - The national, non-profit talent search organization was founded in 1963. The organization was established in response to the call to action by President John F. Kennedy. The goal was to establish equal access to some of the nation's most elite schools (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991).

Elite boarding school – A residential secondary school usually founded in New England between the years of 1778-1901 (McLachlan, 1970)

Completer – An individual participating in this study who has graduated from a boarding school and completed a bachelor's degree

Boarding school – A school at which students receive boarding and lodging

during the school year, usually grades 9-12 (McLachlan, 1970)

Day school – An independent, private school that does not offer a boarding option (Chapman, 1959; Cookson & Persell, 1991; Laney, 1961)

Day student – A student who attends a boarding school, but does not board (Chapman, 1959; Cookson & Persell, 1991)

Independent school- A school that is independent in its finances and governance, not dependent on state or local government. The term independent school has become synonymous private school (Walford, 1990).

Upper school - Usually refers to the high school component of an independent or boarding school, grades 9-12

Limitations

This qualitative study focused on African American and Latino male boarding school completers that went on to successfully complete a Bachelor's degree between the years of 1991-1997. This study did not consider female students or non-completers. The researcher acknowledged the potential contribution that experiences of women and non-completers could add, but the scope of the project required boundaries. Subjects selected for the study (a) are male, (b) attended a private boarding school in the United States prior to attending college, (c) are African American or Latino, (d) graduated college between 1991 & 1997. It has been 25 years since the study participants decided to leave home to participate in the program.

Assumptions

The assumptions underlying this study are:

1. The completers will be able to recall their boarding school experiences.

2. Studying the lived experiences of this population will help future populations.
3. Attending boarding schools will have had positive influences and unintended detrimental consequences.
4. The participants will be willing to discuss the challenges that they faced, and continue to face, as a result of the unintended consequences.

Summary

This study examined the lived experiences of African American and Latino students in the boarding school environment. Chapter I provided a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. The chapter also provided a brief description of the methodology, definition of terms, limitations/delimitations, assumptions and significance of the study.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the pertinent literature regarding elite boarding schools in the United States with details of the culture and environment at these, including a definition of elite boarding school culture in the United States. The infusion of minority students into the elite boarding school via the A Better Chance program is described. Minority students entering boarding schools face a variety of issues, challenges, and barriers that they must overcome in order to successfully matriculate. Finally, there is a review of the relevant literature surrounding the components of the theoretical framework. Although the framework will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, it is important to lay a foundation using the relevant literature in order to better understand the connections between the researcher and the study. The chapter ends with an overview of the community cultural wealth model developed by Tara Yosso (2005).

History of Elite Boarding Schools in the United States

A boarding school, commonly referred to as a preparatory or “prep” school (McLachlan, 1970), is an educational institution where some or all of the students study and live with other students, faculty, and staff during the school year and usually return to their homes during holidays and vacations. Elite boarding schools in the United States date back to the late eighteenth century. The elite boarding school was established by the historically wealthy upper class for the children of the historically wealthy. This elitism went as far as excluding children of immigrants who had become wealthy from mixing with children of established families. Cookson and Persell (1991) explain that, “The prep schools operated as exclusive clubs – Catholics, blacks, and Jews need not apply. From the 1880’s onward the schools developed their reputation for snobbishness, and that they were is undeniable” (p. 51). Elite boarding schools’ graduates had direct access to elite

colleges and universities. This meant access to enhanced educational opportunities, social capital, and networks (Cookson & Persell, 1991). However, access to these opportunities was denied to virtually all minority and poor students until programs were established with the specific goal of granting access to underrepresented groups (History of ABC, para.4, n.d).

Baltzell (1958) and McLachlan (1970) indicate there were 12 and 17 elite boarding schools in the United States between 1778 and 1906, respectively. There is some overlap in the two lists of elite schools, since both authors use similar criteria to establish what is considered “elite.” Baltzell and McLachlan agree that elite boarding schools “tend to have been founded earlier, are larger, have more alumni – and, consequently, are more heavily endowed, have more buildings and playing fields, and are more likely to be located in New England or the Middle or South Atlantic states”(Cookson & Persell, 1985, p.44).

Boarding schools in the Northeast, particularly those in New England, were founded to serve some of the most wealthy and prominent individuals (Baltzell, 1958). Wealthy families in the Northeast, who traditionally used private day schools and tutors to educate their sons, and eventually their daughters, began to send their children to boarding schools in the late nineteenth century (Baltzell, 1958). While many schools fall under the category of “boarding school”, the concept of “elite” indicates not only the caliber of the educational experience, but also the social interactions and development of social capital (Cookson & Persell, 1985).

The same individuals who created and established the boarding schools cultivated connections to such universities as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton towards assured

admission for their students. These founders intended for the boarding schools to serve as a pipeline to elite colleges while protecting and maintaining their upper class status. In discussing the establishment of boarding schools in Boston, Levine (1980) highlights that the founders of boarding schools, “initially wanted to create schools where the children of old established families would be isolated from the children of immigrants and, perhaps, even more importantly, from the *nouveaux riches*” (p. 72).

Minority Student Access to Independent and Boarding Schools

There are several non-profit organizations that focus on preparing and matching minority students with some of the nation’s top ranked independent and boarding schools. The Oliver Scholars program was founded in 1984 with the mission “to prepare outstanding New York City students of color for success at top independent high schools and prestigious colleges” (History of the Oliver Scholars program, n.d., para.1). The program has an even mix of African American and Latino students. Students are selected to participate in the program as early as in the seventh grade. The program has over 1,000 alumni who have completed the program (History of the Oliver Scholars program, n.d., para.1).

Prep for Prep was founded in 1978 in New York City and has over 2,600 students who have gone on to graduate from college. The program was originally founded to prepare minority students from New York City for placement at independent schools within the city. The program eventually expanded to include placement at boarding schools throughout the Northeast and across the country. Students in the Prep for Prep program begin as early as in the fifth grade. Student must enter the program prior to the seventh grade (Mission & History of Prep for Prep, n.d., para 2).

The Oliver Scholars and the Prep for Prep programs are very similar in that both provide their students with necessary preparation to successfully transition to independent day and boarding schools at no cost to the students. These excellent programs provide access and opportunities for the students of New York City and the surrounding areas. The only program that focuses on similar issues on a national scale is the A Better Chance program.

Founded in 1965, the A Better Chance (ABC) program was established with the radical idea of giving high achieving minorities access to some of the most elite college preparatory schools they would otherwise be unable to attend. The mission statement of ABC reads:

In 1963 at the height of the civil rights movement, 23 headmasters of selective independent schools made a mutual commitment to change the profiles and compositions of their student bodies. Through A Better Chance, they would broaden their enrollment to include students of color who were economically disadvantaged but academically able. (ABC History, n.d., para. 4)

ABC is the oldest and only nationally recognized organization of its kind. As of 2014, ABC had over 14,000 alumni and 317 member schools across the nation. The program recruits over 500 students per year with about 2,000 students active in the program at any given time.

Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (1991) researched the early days of ABC using interviews with some of the first students to participate in the program. These interviews, conducted 25 years after the students participated in ABC, revealed many of the issues faced by students participating in the program. The research emphasized the rocky

transition from their home environments to boarding schools and the litany of issues (i.e., racism, classism, and academic preparedness) that they encountered once they arrived on their respective campuses. The interviewed ABC participants attended school during a very sensitive period in United States history. In 1965, the country faced heightened civil rights and racial equality problems. The interviews revealed that although the students were thankful for the opportunities that the program presented, they often had to deal with the barriers of racism, classism, isolation, and marginalization. The students highlighted their desire to achieve and assimilate while also acknowledging feelings of being cut off from their home lives and even from their fellow ABC classmates. ABC students who were perceived as becoming “too close” with their white classmates were questioned about their relationships. This level of assimilation was viewed as turning away from their culture and abandoning their heritage (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991).

The testimonies from early ABC program participants are very powerful to read. They not only convey the raw emotion of the individuals’ personal experience, they serve as a historical marker of the time period in American history. These testimonies are even more impactful when heard directly from the participants. Tom Dey, a graduate of the Choate School and son of the ABC program Director Charles Dey, is currently working on a film that covers the experiences of the early participants in a fashion similar to the interviews done by Zweigenhaft and Domhoff. To hear the testimonies directly from the participants is an intense experience. The interviews allow the listener/viewer to better understand the extent of emotion associated with the ABC experience.

Since ABC began in 1965, there have been few attempts to study or understand program participants’ experiences until the late 1980s (Cookson & Persell, 1991;

Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991). The study by Cookson and Persell (1991) is one of the most cited studies exploring minority students attending boarding school. This comprehensive study included 2,475 freshmen and seniors from 55 American preparatory boarding schools, 106 of the students were African Americans, some of whom were admitted via ABC. Cookson and Persell explored the “double marginalization” concept, which they defined as being marginalized by race and by class. Other scholars’ descriptions of double marginalization are discussed later in this paper.

Studying Minorities in Independent and Boarding Schools

When reviewing the relevant literature regarding the minority student experience in boarding schools, two conclusions emerge. First, the majority of studies conducted were focused on the experiences of African American students. The earliest studies of the topic stated that African Americans were by far the largest population affected by the integration of boarding schools (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991). Second, there is a glaring gap in the research of the second largest group, Latinos. Since 2006, ABC supported a population that is 15%-20% Latino (ABC Annual Reports, 2006-2014); however, no significant research has been conducted on the experiences of the Latino student population in boarding schools. Instead, the experiences of Latino students are intertwined with those of African American students with both groups placed under the heading of “minority” students (Gaztambide-Fernandez & DiAquoi, 2010; Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991). The authors describe the experiences of a Latino student as a “subnarrative,” placing the lived experience of the Latino student in a position that is complex and, although not clearly their own, is loosely related to the experience of the African American students (Gaztambide-Fernandez & DiAquoi, 2010, p. 56). It is with

the understanding of this close connection and relationship that I approach the literature. This is not to assume that the Latino experience is identical to that of the African American student, merely that the experiences of the two groups are closely related. The two groups' bond is based on their position as others or outsiders (Anzaldúa, 2012; Datnow & Cooper, 1997).

The studies conducted by Cookson and Persell (1985), and Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (1991) are among the most cited in regards to minority students in the boarding school environment. Other researchers use these two studies as a foundation for studying minority students in the boarding school environment. The main themes that are consistent throughout are identity development, social capital, and marginalization.

Identity Development. The concept of identity development is discussed in a variety of ways in the literature. Student perspectives play a large role in how identity development is described. Cookson & Persell (1985) interviewed high school freshmen and seniors, while Zweigenhaft & Domhoff (1991) interviewed alumni twenty-five years after graduating. These two groups may have differing perspectives on issues associated with racial identities. The alumni have the luxury of time and retrospection while the high school students are still living in the experience. The research done by The Success of African American Students (SAAS) in Independent Schools covers both the student and the alumni experience. SAAS began as a collaboration between independent school educators and researchers at the University of Pennsylvania. SAAS conducted a longitudinal, mixed methods research project focused on the experiences of African American students in independent schools (SAAS Final Report). The study included quantitative measurement tools such as surveys and questionnaires along with qualitative

components such as interviews and focus groups involving students, parents, alumni, faculty, and staff. Their study focused on four independent schools in Pennsylvania between 1996 and 2001. The study originally set out to focus on the experiences of male students only because, “The group was concerned with the disproportionate numbers of Black boys who were viewed as having either academic or behavior problems or who were leaving the schools they attended — either on their own accord or at the schools’ request” (SAAS Final Report, p. 1).

I have chosen to focus on the qualitative components of the study. Qualitative research allows the researcher to tell the story of the students as they are experiencing it (Mertens, 2009). Students report moving from middle school to school and experiencing a shift in their own identities based on a shift in the peers with which they are associated. One student in the study describes his experience in the following way:

You don’t have as many people to relate to and to get along with. Most of the people come from similar backgrounds except for yourself...And just when you don’t have that many people to relate to, it kind of limits - like white people basically flock to each other. And what happens is like sometimes you feel that you need to be around a certain number of Black people. And sometimes whether you like them that much or not, it doesn’t always matter. (SAAS Final Report, p. 63)

Participants credit positive peer interactions with helping them to remain grounded while exploring their own identity development. Many of the students participating in the study stated that a potential improvement might be to increase the number of African American faculty and staff at their institutions. Alumni who participated in this project reported

issues related to identity development. One alumnus in particular mentioned that the experience and transition to the independent school environment is easier for those who start in middle school as opposed to high school. “Those who start at a younger age are not affected the same [way] as those who arrive at 15 or 16. When you are here earlier, the issues involved with being a young Black kid are really non-existent” (SAAS Final Report, p. 51). Although this individual describes the experience of the non-boarding student attending an independent day school, the issues would be compounded for a student entering boarding school. An individual navigating the boarding school environment, while also internally processing their own identity issues, would have to deal with compounded difficulties.

Cross (1971; 1991) describes the various stages of Black racial identity development. The original model included five stages. The first stage, “pre-encounter,” identifies with white culture. The second, “encounter” stage, is an experience that elicits change. The third stage, “immersion-emersion,” is a shift to Black culture, while the fourth, “internalization,” secures the Black identity. The final stage, “internalization-commitment,” maintains Black identity while revisiting social oppression (Worrell, Cross & Vandiver, 2001; pg. 202). The second (encounter) and third (immersion-emersion) stages appear to be critical in African Americans’ identity development while attending boarding schools. The encounter stage is linked to an intense emotional or personal experience in the student’s life. The transition to boarding school would be a prime example of this type of experience that would transition a student to the third stage. The immersion-emersion stage is describe as the phase where the individual has a heavy pro-Black and an anti-white mentality. This transition for an African American in a

predominantly white boarding school could prove to be very difficult (Worrell et al., 2001).

Coulombe (2006) explored minority student experiences in boarding schools with current students who were fully immersed in their experiences. This study of seven minority students at an elite boarding school examined various influences on the students' identity development. The author found students' experiences with familial relations and expectations (remembering where you came from, dealing with discrimination, etc.) added to the pressures of moving into the boarding school environment (racism, classism) (Coulombe, 2006). The concept of identity was challenged from the moment that the students arrived on campus. The author described students moving from "culturally syntonetic schools and neighborhoods" to "culturally dissonant environment[s]" (Coulombe, 2006, p. 136). Coulombe captured the students' experiences with the thick description and detailed narrative that are typical of qualitative research. Coulombe (2006) concluded that race and social class played paramount roles in the development of the students' identities:

They all felt that race and social class were significant influences on how they defined themselves. Several students felt that their race was the most important part of who they were. Their explanations for why race was important included the emphasis put on it by their families and the visibility of their race. (p. 182)

Maintaining a connection to family was difficult for the boarding school students, with many being separated from home for months at a time (Coulombe, 2006; Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991).

The home life of the students played an essential role in regards to racial identity

development. DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011) discussed identity development for African American students in predominantly white independent schools. This study highlighted the role of family in the establishing and maintaining a sense of cultural awareness. The authors used a bioecological approach to explore students' identity development. The framework used was comprised of a microsystem and a mesosystem. The microsystem is made up of the environment around the individual (parents, siblings, and teachers) whereas the mesosystem describes the interactions within the microsystems (school, church, home) (p. 118). This is relevant because students attending boarding schools were no longer in constant contact or proximity to their microsystems and, thus, often found greater levels of negative interactions within their mesosystems. This was best described as a difficulty navigating home life and school life. The students' connection with their microsystem served as protection from potentially negative experiences, whereas extended separation could leave the students exposed. (DeCuir-Gunby et al., p.127) The authors noted, "with respect to African American students, research has suggested that youth attending predominantly White schools may have distinct challenges, including negotiation of their race-related identity and increased experiences with racial discrimination" (p. 117). These identity development challenges may be evident to the individual student experiencing the phenomenon while the ramifications of the experience would best be articulated by individuals having time to process the separation. Separation from a home environment for a minority boarding school student also leads to complications with communication and erosion of emotional support. A severed or non-existent connection with home can leave a student feeling isolated from two separate worlds (Cunnion, 1996).

Parker (1991) described the students' desire to "fit in" but not "blend in." Students struggled to make the necessary adjustment for survival in their new environments without letting go of their identity. The students may have developed two ways of talking, two ways of dressing, and two sets of friends and relationships. The balancing act is difficult, especially for those entering the environment for the first time. According to Parker (1991):

For students who entered the independent school for the first time at the middle or high school level, the first year required substantial adjustment. Depending upon the ethnic composition of the African American students' previous school(s) the student body at the independent school may have been somewhat of a "culture shock". (p. 68)

Many students constantly struggle with conforming to the dominant culture and maintaining a sense of their own culture. The balancing act described in various ways throughout the literature can be linked back to the concept of double consciousness described by W.E.B. DuBois (1903). Dubois describes the plight of African Americans at the turn off the century as follows, "One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder"(p. 215).

The burden of balancing is prevalent for minority boarding school students. Kramer (2008) describes the minority experience in predominantly white institutions as "diversifiers." The role of the diversifier is to "[teach] others how to interact with people from different class and racial backgrounds" (p. 287). This role adds yet another burden to the task of being academically successful in a foreign, sometimes hostile environment.

“The diversifier mindset is defined primarily by [the minority student] finding satisfaction in teaching elite peers how to properly interact with people from different, generally less privileged, backgrounds.” (p. 294). Kramer describes these students as ambassadors or bridge builders. Their role is not to challenge the boarding school environment, but to serve as a representative for their race and social class. The author further clarifies:

In short, a diversifier does not object nor fight, a diversifier must instead educate—even when faced with openly prejudiced peers... A diversifier must suffer personal indignities in order to help the other students avoid insulting people who have not been prepared to be diversifiers. (pp. 294-295)

This additional role can place a heavy burden upon young people who are already struggling with their own complications due to being separated from their homes and their families.

Social and Cultural Capital. The boarding school environment provides students with access to social and cultural capital (Cookson & Persell, 1985). Several of the studies in this review utilize the model of social and cultural capital established by Bourdieu (1986). Social capital is defined as the “possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships....[a] membership in a group” (p. 248). Bourdieu asserts that cultural capital exists in three forms, the embodied state (mind and body), the objectified state (cultural goods), and the institutionalized state.

The benefits from social and cultural capital gained by minorities attending boarding school could result in changing the lives of the students and their families (Parker, 1991; Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991) This capital is gathered and accumulated

over time and could be transferred generationally (Bourdieu, 1986). Accumulated capital often can result in the establishment of generational wealth. Although the benefits are clear, a critical analysis of the costs to the access seems warranted.

The literature provides a variety of perspectives in regards to how social and cultural capital are obtained. Social and cultural capital for students at boarding school can be gained from within their own social networks as well as from the dominant culture of the boarding school. Students and alumni from the SAAS project highlight the positive aspects of attending and graduating from a quality independent school. When asked about the benefits of the independent school experience, one student noted (SAAS Final Report):

I would definitely say the name [of the school]. The very name of the school, you put that on a college application, the people will instantly fall in love with you. Like, I've been to several colleges and they ask me what school I go to. I say, [the name of this school] and their eyes just light up. And I definitely thank God that I went to a school like this where everyone knows the school all throughout the nation. (p. 63)

Other students in the SAAS study go on to mention that although their schools were not culturally diverse, they felt more prepared for real world experiences by being placed in a predominantly white environment.

Alexander-Snow (1999) challenges the notion that minority students attending boarding schools are able to gain and maintain social and cultural capital. This study chronicles the transition and acclimation to collegiate life experienced by ~~for~~ two African American female graduates of a historically-white boarding school. When analyzing

their experiences, Alexander-Snow observes, “[The] white boarding school experience did not provide them with any extraordinary benefits in terms of helping them deal with students and others who are unaware of, or insensitive to, Black history, culture, and perspectives on life” (p. 116). Although this was a study limited to the experiences of two individuals, it clearly challenges the notion of social capital attainment. Some alumni of the SAAS study echo the sentiments expressed by Alexander-Snow. One individual in particular noted that “they were discouraged from applying to an elite college/university by their school’s guidance counselor. This particular alumni decided to apply anyway, was accepted, and matriculated at the elite school” (p. 50).

This student’s experience highlights an outcome that is the opposite of gaining the optimal social capital.

Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) described how established “funds of knowledge” are accumulated and utilized by families. “Funds of knowledge” refers to the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). This view of social capital draws from the strength, history, and shared knowledge of a culture and community. Minority students attending boarding schools are separated from this source of knowledge, unable to draw from it or contribute to it.

Conducting a comprehensive study, Bass (2007) analyzed the concept of social capital by comparing two boarding schools, one in North America and one in South Africa. Bass used Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of social capital to frame her research. Bass conducted observations, surveys, and interviews of students, parents, faculty and staff; and reviewed relevant school documents. The survey was geared toward gauging student

satisfaction with the social and academic experience found in boarding schools while comparing the boarding school experience to their home and previous school experience. This study is important because it represents a comprehensive analysis of the North American boarding school experience. The researcher concluded that the boarding school experience had a positive effect on the social, cultural, and educational capital of the underrepresented boarding school students (Bass, 2007). Bass made a strong case for enhanced social and cultural capital, especially for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Bass described social capital as “the degree to which people can garner friendships and relationships to benefit them in other ways” (p. 83). For these students, being present in a positive environment had positive results for establishing social capital. Bass asserted:

...students who come from either an economically disadvantaged background or from parents who do not have the time to take their children around to the various activities would benefit most from being in the boarding environment for social networking reasons. (p. 139)

Similar to social capital, cultural capital benefits are gained when in a positive environment. Bass (2007) defined cultural capital as “the benefit gained when students are exposed to different cultural elements that enlighten them and add to their personal experience” (p. 89). Unfortunately, the researcher was vague when highlighting and outlining the educational capital benefits for students attending boarding schools. Bass maintained that students’ educational capital is linked to human capital and is “the degree to which education adds to the value of what a person has to offer as a direct result of the education he or she has received” (p. 91). The researcher described the characteristics

that made the boarding school environment rich with educational capital, such as the small class size, the lack of standardized testing, and the additional resources provided; however, these are also aspects of quality schooling and are not necessarily unique to the boarding school environment.

In a later study, Bass (2014) extended her exploration of the potential advantages of boarding school. This study examined whether the advantages gained by attending boarding school could close the achievement gaps for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. For this study, Bass investigated 120 students at a small, northeastern boarding school. The researcher used qualitative methods that included questionnaires (n=32), student interviews (n=19), and observations, along with interviews of teachers, counselors, and administrators. The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not students who attend boarding schools experience greater exposure to social, cultural, and educational capital as a result of being educated in the boarding school environment. Bass focused on the school's overarching goal of offering parents more educational options for their children. Her findings included that the boarding school environment promoted the attainment of social capital and increased the opportunity for cultural and social capital. Bass also suggested that adopting the elite boarding school model is a good alternative for disenfranchised students from high poverty backgrounds. Bass continues that, "The structure of boarding or residential schools provides the opportunity for schools to exercise control over a larger portion of the student's day than traditionally formatted day schools, allowing schools to more fully implement practices proven successful" (p. 18).

Other studies examine the benefits of boarding and independent schools for a

variety of populations. Several of these studies suggest a connection between identity development and social and cultural capital. Datnow and Cooper (1997) discuss the influences of peer group interactions on the academic success of African American students in predominantly white independent schools. Although this study did not focus on students attending an independent school that is not also a boarding school, their discoveries align very well with the research presented on the boarding school experience. The researchers found that culture shock and marginalization can be combated through a combination of strong formal and informal peer group support. The development of academic identity is not separate from the development of a cultural or social identity. Datnow and Cooper (1997) stated, “The formal and informal peer networks developed by these African American students functioned in powerful ways to help shape their academic and social experiences in the predominantly White elite independent school setting” (p.70).

Additionally, establishing networks plays a significant role in the identity development. The shared experiences, both positive and negative, help the student to grow while allowing them to cope with challenging life experiences (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Jackson, 2010).

Marginalization and Displacement. Marginalization surfaces as one of the major barriers faced by minority students in the boarding school culture. Cookson and Persell (1985) assert that marginalization is one of the most challenging dilemmas faced by minority students in boarding schools. African American students are often doubly marginalized by race and by class (p. 220). Adjustment for these students is often difficult due to their simultaneous attempt to address both aspects. The authors go on to

say:

Most often this dilemma causes confusion because it is only the unusual student who can fully and consciously recognize that he or she is doubly marginalized by race and class; yet, how can integration and isolation coexist without causing confusion, especially among developing adolescents. (p. 224)

As previously mentioned, a young person without a connection to their home life and microsystem is at a disadvantage (Cunnion, 1996; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). It becomes a matter of how to navigate the race and identity issue (Coulombe, 2006), and come to terms with and overcome the class issue (Cookson & Persell, 1991).

The body of research presents us with other definitions of minority student marginalization in boarding schools. Parker (1991), and Datnow and Cooper (1997) highlight a version of double marginalization as comprised of being marginalized in both the school and home environment. This occurs when a minority student attempts to make adjustments in order to fit in or become accepted in the school environment. This adjustment to the school environment has the potential to separate students further from the home environment. Parker (1991) notes that, “Most of the students indicated that they too had encountered situations in which they had been caught between two peer cultures and had been forced to defend their behaviors outside school and even sometimes within school” (p. 68). The unfortunate result can be that the student eventually does not fully fit comfortably into either environment. Marginalization and displacement due to race and class are all barriers to student success. The support structures that are put in place to assist these students are key to their success. The students may understand what they are sacrificing and how it will be beneficial to their life goals. The literature highlights what

is seen as the benefits of attending an elite boarding school. The benefits of the boarding school environment include increased social capital and access (Bass, 2014; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). It is important to understand the positive gains achieved via social capital and the detrimental effects of social isolation. Specifically, the education quality may be heightened and the educational experience may be enhanced. Students who attend boarding school or private school benefit as much from the environment as from the instruction; however, the environment has detrimental aspects as well. Students attending boarding school, especially elite boarding schools, experience social isolation from their peers and their home lives (Bass, 2014; Cookson & Persell, 1985; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Zweigenhaft & Domhoff 1991).

Child displacement and homesickness are two theories that appear to be overlooked in the literature in regards to minority student attendance in American boarding schools. However, the two concepts are covered more extensively in the literature pertaining to students attending boarding schools in Great Britain (Fisher, Frazer & Murray, 1984). Displacement refers to children who have been removed from their parents, immediate family, or settings where they were raised (Joshi & Fayyad, 2015). This usually refers to refugee children, children in foster care, or homeless children. Because displacement is typically a non-voluntary separation, it does not readily apply to this particular discussion on students voluntarily attending boarding schools. But, is there a similar impact? The Native American boarding schools of the late 19th century are a textbook definition of displacement due to the non-voluntary aspect and the intense focus on eradicating the culture of the students and forcing assimilation. Fisher et al. (1984) discuss the theory of loss of contact with home that transitions into

homesickness:

First, change usually involves a break with the past and what is familiar and predictable. Second, change may involve loss of significant relationships with those in the 'old' environment. Third, change may create interruption of ongoing life activity creating a vacuum for a while. Fourth, when exposed to the new environment a person may experience loss of control due to new and unexpected events and circumstances. Finally, change often creates new roles and self-identity has to be evolved to match this....It is likely that these conditions create composite effects on the individual and that these reflect in distress levels. (p. 71)

Although issues of displacement and homesickness do not appear as often in the literature as marginalization, these issues are closely aligned.

The Conceptual Framework.

The study used Yosso's (2005) model of community cultural wealth to explore the lived experiences of African American and Latino males in the boarding school environment. The model was born from the concepts of marginalization and being outsiders. In the study, Anzaldua (2012) describes the outsider as attempting to navigate two or more cultures. The community cultural wealth model uses the tenets of critical race theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 1998) to challenge dominant ideologies. The five tenets of CRT are: (a) the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective.

Yosso (2005) utilized these five CRT tenets for "critiquing deficit theorizing and

data that may be limited by its omission of the voices of People of Color” (p. 75). The model challenges previous concepts of capital established by Bourdieu (1986):

A traditional view of cultural capital is narrowly defined by White, middle class values, and is more limited than wealth—one’s accumulated assets and resources.... Centering the research lens on the experiences of People of Color in critical historical context reveals accumulated assets and resources in the histories and lives of Communities of Color (p. 77).

The model considers other aspects of capital that are not unique to the dominant culture. If the dominant culture is allowed to dictate what is and is not valuable, the experiences of People of Color become devalued (Yosso, 2005). The community cultural wealth model contains six forms of capital: (a) aspirational, (b) navigational, (c) social, (d) linguistic, (e) familial, and (f) resistant (see Table 1).

Table 1

Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model – Forms of Capital

Forms of Capital	Definition
Aspirational	The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers.
Navigational	The skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind.
Social	The establishment of networks of people and community resources. These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions
Linguistic	The intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style
Familial	Engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship.
Resistant	The knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality

The community cultural wealth model is used in a variety of studies to highlight the various forms of capital that Communities of Color bring to educational settings. It has been used to explore high school students (Loza, 2015; Ruecker, 2012), international students attending independent schools (Bihn, 2014), community college students (Cervantes-Gonzalez, 2015; Martin, 2014), and four-year traditional college student populations (Perez, 2012; Smith, 2014).

The community cultural wealth model is an ideal framework for this study for several reasons. First, the model has been used in a variety of studies related to Communities of Color in educational settings. Second, this study would add to the body of knowledge by including another unique strand (boarding schools) in the educational field. Third, the model challenges the dominant culture and attempts to form a knowledge base that is not subordinate. Previous studies cited in this review used models of social and cultural capital that do not focus on the values and experiences of communities of color.

Summary

Chapter two discussed the establishment of elite boarding schools in the United States. A specific focus was placed on how certain schools were established as elite. The chapter went on to discuss the movement to grant equal access to these elite secondary institutions. Access programs like the A Better Chance program was outlined and included efforts to make the independent and boarding schools more accessible for larger portions of the community. Literature was presented describing the variety of issues minority students encounter, as well as the resulting effects. While the literature clearly identified greater access to forms of social and cultural capital for minority students, who

may not have otherwise had access, the costs associated with greater access in the form of marginalization and displacement were also a prominent theme in the literature.

Research, thus far, has not fully considered the lived experiences of Latino students and has not used a framework that fully considers the experiences of communities of color.

Finally, an introduction to Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth was presented as the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Elite boarding schools have been a part of the educational fabric of the United States since the late 1700's (McLachlan, 1970). African American and Latino students gained access in the early 1960's as a result of advances made by the civil rights movement. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology and procedures that will be used to conduct this study on the lived experiences of African American and Latino completers of elite boarding school. The chapter will describe the proposed research design and methods, the participants, the data collection instruments and methods, and the procedures for data analysis.

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences African American and Latino male graduates of elite boarding schools. The researcher studied a specific cohort of males that successfully navigated the boarding school environment and went on to successfully complete their undergraduate degrees between the years of 1991 and 1997. The researcher sought to answer these questions:

1. How do African American and Latino graduates of boarding schools describe their boarding school experiences?
2. What factors do boarding school graduates perceive as contributing to their success?

Research Design

This was a qualitative study using phenomenological methodology. Qualitative research uses the words and experiences to study a phenomenon in context. (Mertens, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011) Snape and Spence (2003) state that “qualitative research

covers a broad range of approaches which are linked to different beliefs about what there is to know about the social world” (p. 22); phenomenology is one of these approaches. Hays & Singh (2011) describe the purpose of phenomenological research as finding “the meaning or essence of participants’ lived experiences” (p. 50). This fits well with the model presented by Yosso (2005). The heuristic tradition is added in order to understand the “intense experience of the human condition” of a phenomenon that has “personal significance to the researchers involved” (p. 52). Hays and Singh accurately describe the goals of this particular research project as, “...the interaction between person and experience is personally relevant to the heuristic researchers, as examined phenomena are experiences that they seek to reflect upon in collaboration with the co-researchers and participants” (p. 52).

Description of the Participants

The participants for this study are eleven African American and Latino males who started their secondary education at an elite boarding school and who persisted through completion of their post-secondary education. A pilot project was conducted to establish relationships with participants, to test survey tools and interview questions, and to solicit leads for additional participants for the larger study. The pilot project was comprised of no more than three participants selected by the researcher. These individuals were identified via the researcher’s personal connections with previous completers. For this study, the researcher employed criterion and snowball sampling. Criterion sampling refers to “sample participants who are selected because they meet an important, predetermined criterion” (Hays & Singh, 2011, p. 170). This method was ideal because of the very specific make-up of the sample population. Snowball sampling is taking a

participant who meets the criteria and asking them if they know of any additional individuals (Hays & Singh, 2011). It is a fast way to expand the network of participants. Once a pool of qualified participants was established, the researcher was able to use that group to snowball into a larger pool of qualified participants.

Data Collection Instruments

There are two levels of participation in this study: (a) survey, and (b) interview. The initial survey was tested within the pilot project and modified for the larger project. The pilot project and the final project received University of Texas Institutional Review Board Approval (Appendix A). Feedback gathered from the pilot was critical to the development of the final survey (Mertens, 2009). The survey was distributed electronically (via Qualtrics) and served two purposes. The first purpose was to gather demographic information about the participants. The survey was comprised of open-ended and close-ended questions geared toward gathering information regarding the respondents' impressions and memories of their boarding school experiences. Lastly, the survey also served to determine if the respondents were willing and qualified to participate in the interview portion of the study. The participants had the opportunity to review their responses prior to submitting and prior to the start of the interview process. This was a part of the member checking exercises that took place at several different points in the study.

Individual interviews are the most often used information gathering technique in qualitative research (Hays & Singh, 2011; Lewis, 2003). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a minimum of eight participants selected from individuals that participated in the survey process of the study. The semi-structured process had an

interview protocol that was flexible and allowed the interviewees more control in describing their experience and telling their stories (Hays & Singh, 2011). This format fit well with the phenomenological framework of this study, with the goal being to study and understand the lived experience of the participants. Due to location and travel, the interviews were conducted using web-based meeting technology such as Skype or Google Hangout. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by a professional agency. Once again, the participants were given an opportunity to review the transcribed interview. The transcripts from the interviews were coded using a qualitative research analysis tool (Dedoose).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected via surveys and individual interviews. The study surveyed a minimum of fifteen participants. The survey was distributed electronically with the submission feeding in to a database (Qualtrics) for analysis. The survey, which was demographic in nature, focused the process of capturing information on the themes outlined in the conceptual framework. The survey solicited second level participation by inquiring if the respondent was interested in participating in follow-up interviews. Respondents had an opportunity to check and edit their responses prior to submission. At the completion of the survey process, individual interviews were conducted. The interviews were professionally transcribed and shared with the participants to check for validity and to gain further insight. After this point, all personally identifiable information was removed prior to the coding process.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this study are the selected methodology and research tradition. A

qualitative study from the phenomenological perspective is an excellent way to focus on the lived experience of the participants. The researcher's relationship with the topic as well as his relationship with the subjects was also a strength. The personal relationships and connections had developed over twenty years and allowed the researcher unique access. This personal knowledge and closeness to the participants and subject matter also served as a potential limitation.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness and quality are rooted in the research design. It is imperative that the research design and data collection process were managed properly. Journaling was a key component to the research process. The researcher kept a reflexive journal throughout the entire process in order to track the progress of the study and to document any major issues. For this project, member checking was a key aspect of establishing trustworthiness. There was member checking after the survey, after the individual interviews, and during the development of themes. Triangulation of data methods will be used to compare the data from the multiple methods of collection. Triangulation "involves including several perspectives or participant voices during the qualitative process" (Mertens, 2009, p. 207).

Researcher Positionality

The researcher is well positioned to conduct this project. He is an alumnus of the A Better Chance program. He graduated from Milton Academy in 1990 and Columbia University in 1994. Through his own personal networks, he has access to individuals that are willing to participate in the study as well as open up their personal networks to allow participation from other qualified individuals. He has attended high school and/or

college with some of the individuals that will participate in this study. He will have a certain level of familiarity with the participants of the study. That higher level of comfort could be an advantage. The familiarity could also be a negative due to being too close to the participants to be objective. There is a high level of reciprocity between the researcher and the participants in this project due to the shared experience of being a low-income minority male in the boarding school environment which can also influence a group's ideas. There are no apparent major ethical matters to consider in regards to working with this particular population. The key to gathering good data is making sure that all phases of the research process are managed properly. This is of particular importance in this project due to the researcher's previously established relationship with some of the study participants.

Summary

Chapter Three included a description of the research design; a description of the participants, data collection and analysis; and a review of the ethical and quality considerations. This chapter also included a table of the theoretical framework that serves as the base for this project.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter will describe the major findings of this study. This chapter will summarize and explain the composite descriptions of the two boarding schools the participants attended. The composites were created with descriptions and characteristics of several schools. This will be followed by the profiles of the eleven candidates who participated in the study. The profiles contain a brief accounting of the participants' background and upbringing along with the circumstances that led each of the participants to attend boarding school. A majority of the participants were introduced to a boarding school by the A Better Chance (ABC) program. As previously mentioned, ABC was founded in 1963 with the intent of introducing high achieving, low income minority students to exclusive college preparatory/boarding schools. After ABC selects the qualified candidates, ABC matches the students with the various partner schools (History of A Better Chance, n.d.). As of 2014, ABC had over 14,000 alumni and 317 member schools across the nation. The program recruits over 500 students per year with about 2,000 students active in the program at any given time. Following the student profiles, there is an account of the participants called "lived experiences." This account includes descriptions of transitioning to boarding schools, overcoming barriers, and identifying those things that they feel led to their eventual success.

The Schools

The composites of the two schools, Westmont Academy and the Riverton School, were obtained by interview data, personal knowledge of similar schools, and historical and archival data. Riverton School represents a composite of a rural boarding school that

is not located near a major urban center. Riverton School was located near a small town in New England. Westmont represents a composite of an urban boarding school that has easy access to a major urban center.

The Riverton School was founded in the late 1700s. The 450-acre campus is located in the town of Cedar which is located over fifty miles away from the closest urban center in New England. The town of Cedar's population consists of less than eighteen thousand residents (96% White). Riverton was known for "developing some of this nation's greatest leaders" and was one of the first schools that partnered with the A Better Chance program in the 1960s.

Riverton is impressive in size and grandeur. It could easily be mistaken for a small college or university. Historically speaking, Riverton is one of the oldest boarding schools in the nation. There are several boarding schools in New England that were founded using the Riverton model as their guide. Students who attended Riverton worked toward the goal of gaining admittance to Ivy League universities. The Riverton School is actually larger than the town, and some argue that the school predates the town. Riverton has a reported endowment of over one billion dollars. The current cost of tuition, room, and board for students attending Riverton exceeds \$48,000 per year. Over 600 students attend grades 9-12 with seventy-five percent of those students living on campus in residential dormitories. The school has no lower school (K-8) component, which adds to the feel of a more traditional boarding school.

Large trees line the side of the street that leads to the main entrance of campus. The entrance to campus has a large wrought gate that opens to a long driveway. The driveway leads to the historical administrative building at the center of the campus. The

grounds are immaculate and expansive. The campus includes a healthy mix of old, traditional buildings and new architecture. The majority of the students at Riverton live on campus. The school is structured to be socially self-sustaining with the expectation of meeting the needs of the students. The massive campus has everything that the students need, such as several dining halls, student centers, dormitories, work out facilities, and ample athletic facilities. Except when they are visiting schoolmates who live near the campus, students boarding at Riverton rarely go into the town of Cedar.

Westmont Academy is situated on a 200-acre campus in the town of Fry, less than twenty miles from an urban center in New England (accessible via public transportation). The town of Fry is quintessentially a small town in New England with a population of less than thirty thousand residents (70% White, 20% AA, 10% Other). Fry has a rich historical heritage, community life, and a close proximity to an urban center. Westmont Academy was founded in the early 1800s and has over 250 endowed programs, which are funded by an endowment of over \$200 million dollars. The current cost of tuition, room, and board for students attending Westmont is approximately \$52,000 per year.

The Westmont campus has a mix of old buildings that have been a part of the campus since its founding and more modern buildings. The athletic fields are well-groomed and the state-of-the-art sports complexes are spread throughout the campus. Boarding schools traditionally taken pride in their students' athletic experience and Westmont is no different. Students are encouraged to join sports teams to fulfill the physical education requirement.

Over 300 students attend grades 9-12 at Westmont, with forty percent living on campus in seven residential dormitories. Westmont classes are small, no larger than

twelve to fifteen students per classroom. Although exclusive by design, the school has an expansive and open feel to it. The campus is neither tucked away nor secluded. There are no high walls or long driveways leading up to a grand entrance. Traffic from the town of Fry flows through the main campus, past the administrative buildings, library, and dorms. There are other aspects of the school that add to its open feel. Noteworthy among them is that Westmont has a lower school for grades K-8, and more than half of the students in grades 9-12 are day students (commuters). The majority of the students that attend the school are not boarding students. As a result, the flow of students, to and from campus, makes the school feel like a lively place. Students from Westmont are able to walk a few blocks and catch public transportation to the city. This access also makes the school seem less remote or isolated.

The Participants

Eleven men were interviewed for this project, six African Americans and five Latinos. Eight of the participants attended Westmont and three attended Riverton. Each of the participants' stories is grand in its own way. In reality, each of these men, taken alone, could have been the subject of an interesting study, project, or paper. Eight of the eleven participants were introduced to the boarding school by means of the ABC program, two found their way to the boarding school due to the efforts or experience of their parents, and one gained admittance with the help of his middle school counselor after not being accepted to the ABC program.

Six of the participants described their childhood homes as middle or lower middle class with five participants stating that they came from a lower class or poor environment. The participants who reported to be from middle class environments typically described their

prior school environment as diverse or integrated. However, these students from integrated, middle class backgrounds still found the magnitude of the boarding school environment to be overwhelming. To further put things in the proper perspective, it is important to recognize that these students left home to attend boarding school ~~between~~ in the years 1987-1990. It is significant because a major drug epidemic was caused by the introduction and saturation of crack cocaine in 1985, which affected many inner cities. Several of the participants mentioned the changes that were taking place in their home neighborhoods due to this fact.

Paul. Paul is a 43-year-old African American male from a small Midwestern town. He is married with two children and currently works as an emergency room physician. He was raised in a middle class home by his two parents who were in the process of resolving a divorce during his time at the Westmont School. Paul was introduced to the boarding school system by ABC and was matched with several schools. Paul's father played a major role in his introduction to boarding school. Paul stated:

I really didn't know what I was getting into. I think my father was really driving me to do it because there was a girl from our area who had gone to [boarding school] and he took me and showed me these schools... I looked at them and I was fourteen; I didn't know; I had no real expectations. One spring break he loaded up the car, and me, my dad and step-mother drove out from home to New England, and we basically just showed up at these schools. That was my father's great plan. I don't even think he called ahead. We just showed up on campus and just started walking around. We visited Riverton, Westmont, and some other small school. That is my dad; we basically just showed up.

Paul is a large man who enjoys smiling and laughing. He laughed as he recollected his father's methods and actions, a healthy mix of determination, planning, and spontaneity. Paul spent three years at Westmont prior to earning several degrees from an Ivy League university.

Joseph. Joseph is a 44-year-old African American male and is the oldest participant interviewed. Joseph is divorced with no children and currently works in the financial sector. He is a very reserved man who tends to speak softly and to choose his words carefully. He was raised by his two parents in a large Midwest town. A family friend introduced him to the ABC program. ABC matched him with Riverton and an additional school. Joseph's father was actively involved in the application process. Although his mother was familiar with boarding schools, she was not excited about the notion of her son leaving home at such a young age. Joseph remembered, "My mother had the biggest, what shall we say, veto power. She ended up being convinced that it was a good move for me." He stated that his family gave him two pieces of advice as he departed for boarding school. The first was, "You are there for an education." The second was that there was no need to share the information with anyone that he was on a scholarship. "Basically, it was none of their damn business. They don't talk about what they have; why should you talk to them about what you have or don't have?" If life were a game, Joseph would be described as the type to know all the rules. After attending Riverton, Joseph went on to receive several degrees from an Ivy League university.

Landon. Landon is a 42-year-old African American male. He is married with a two-year-old son and currently works in the financial sector. He was raised by a single

mother in a mid-sized town in the Midwest. Landon was introduced to ABC by a family friend, and Westmont was the only school that Landon was matched with. As a stipulation for his acceptance to Westmont, he was asked to repeat his freshman year of high school. This is not an uncommon occurrence for students transitioning from public school to boarding school. When reflecting on this requirement, Landon stated:

They just asked that I repeat that year of school, and I'd like to think it showed maturity on my part that it took me all of a minute to say 'yes I'll do it' given the opportunity that it presented. I really didn't think much about it until school started, and I kind of saw the sophomore class students who were there, who really should have been my peers if I would have stayed on grade. That was a little difficult at first.

Repeating a year of school was not something that he feels affected him adversely in the long run. Landon attended Westmont for four years before going on to an Ivy League college, and graduating in four years.

Lem. Lem is a 44-year-old African American male from a large east coast metropolitan center. Lem is divorced with two kids and is currently a professor at a small liberal arts college. He participated in the ABC program and was matched with several schools. Lem reflected on the fact that he had a cousin who also participated in the program, but he was unaware of this fact until he was going through the admissions process himself:

Yeah, it's funny because that just tells you a lot about my damn family, that's for sure. My mom's brother lives in town; he lives maybe 10-15 minutes from me. Only in the process of going through ABC and everything did he even mention

that my cousin went to St. Paul's.

Although he is proud of where he comes from, he knew that his environment was progressively becoming more unsafe:

It just got to the point where I was actually cutting class and I was a good student.

I was cutting 9th grade science just so I could get home early and avoid getting jumped at the bus stop. When my dad was realizing why I was doing that and why

I was dressing like ... I used to dress really bummy to go to school.

Gang activity and violence were on the rise, and Lem wanted a way out. When asked about his public schools, he stated, "From the outside, it looked like a penitentiary, ridiculously high fences with barbed wire and caged windows." Lem attended the Westmont School for four years and attended college in upstate New York.

Rafael. Rafael is a 41-year-old Latino male raised by his parents in a major metropolitan city on the west coast. Rafael currently works as a corporate strategy officer. He is married with one child and another on the way. He was introduced to boarding school by his middle school counselor. Rafael is quick to point out that he is not an alumnus of the ABC program. He considers his path to boarding school different and unique. He spoke fondly of the support he received from his middle school counselor and how she was committed to getting him into boarding school:

In 7th grade, she told me about this high school, Riverton. I had no idea where it was. In 8th grade, we tried to apply through ABC but I wasn't competitive. Long story short, I think the director at that time was more focused on getting African American students into prep school. I really didn't have the support, and my counselor got very bitter at that. In 9th grade, we applied ourselves, alone. That's

the only school I applied to. She groomed me from the age of 12 to the age of 15. I became involved with student government. I became involved with gardening club. I became involved with the drama club. I became part of the leadership activities, had a high GPA, and mediocre SSAT (Secondary School Admissions Test) score. The only school we applied to was Riverton. It was a leap of faith, blind faith. Because of her, I got in; she even paid for my application fee.

His parents were not in favor of him attending boarding school, but they had a change of mind after the school counselor spoke to them about the opportunity. He attended Riverton Academy for three years before going on to earn multiple degrees.

Edward. Edward is a 43-year-old African American male who grew up in a Midwestern town with his mother and two brothers. Edward, a corporate executive, was introduced to boarding schools via ABC. He stated that he has always been curious and was eager to see the world beyond his hometown. He did not feel academically challenged by his middle school learning environment, which he describes as a “middle class high school that was split between whites and blacks in similar economic conditions.” Prior to applying to boarding school, Edward had contemplated getting involved in the drug trade. When asked how he felt about getting accepted to boarding school, Edward stated:

I was happy. To me it validated that I was smart and at the time my city was going through some transitions. It ain’t always been a great place to live, but, during the time I applied and was accepted, crack (cocaine) had kind of taken over my city.

When it comes to code switching, being able to turn one persona off and turn another one

on, Edward is one of the best. During our conversation, he often goes from the block to the boardroom in the same breath. Before he left for boarding school, many around Edward feared that he would fall prey to the trappings of his environment and turn to selling drugs. Edward was matched with several schools, but selected Westmont:

...because there were already two people from my town that I had met that went to Westmont. That seemed like a more comfortable way to play it for me, going there with somebody that I had seen before that I knew was from my same town that I could ask questions. This was all new to me, and, so, I was going to need some help, and there were two people who from my town who were already at Westmont.

Edward attended the Westmont School for three years prior to graduating from an Ivy League college.

Carl. Carl is a 41-year-old Latino male from a large east coast city. Carl is single and currently works as a political consultant. Carl's time spent around political circles makes him a natural talker. He described his public school as a "poor and dangerous public school in a low income neighborhood. The school had overcrowded classrooms and limited resources." Carl was introduced to boarding school via ABC. He stated that he believed his application process was very non-traditional. His middle school guidance counselor introduced his honors class to the ABC program. Carl neglected to apply while, at the same time, several of his classmates were accepted to the program. His mother was unhappy that he had not attempted to take advantage of the opportunity. In an effort to please her, Carl completed the entire application process in less than two months in order to be early for the next admissions cycle. Instead of being

early for the next admissions cycle, he was matched with several schools for the fall semester. Although he was matched with and accepted to several schools, he was late in the process most of the schools had already allocated all of their financial aid. Carl stated:

I got in but they said they didn't have enough financial aid, so I really didn't consider any of them 'cause my family could not afford it. Only way I was going to go if I got pretty much one hundred percent aid. Then about early August I got a call from Westmont. They said a spot opened up, and we have a full scholarship for you, but we need to know now. I had day to decide. I literally got in to Westmont about two weeks before school started. I decided to attend literally two weeks before minority orientation program started.

Carl attended Westmont for four years prior to graduating from an Ivy League university.

Bradley. Bradley is a 41-year-old African American male from a large city in the northeast. Bradley was raised in a household with both his parents and his six siblings. He was accepted to several boarding schools and selected Westmont because of the people he met when he visited the campus. He was not introduced to boarding school by ABC or any other program. His father became familiar with the boarding school culture and system by way of his being educated in the northeast. Bradley's father played an active role getting several of his children connected with boarding schools. Three of Bradley's siblings attended boarding schools. He stated that there was a divide between those who attended and those who did not. Bradley was excited to be leaving what he described as a "dysfunctional" family environment and was unsure of how to describe his departure to some of his friends. He stated:

We had a whole bunch of friends in the neighborhood. It was a mix of black folk living in the projects across the street. They just didn't even know what the hell Westmont was. They were just like, "Okay, whatever." There were a variety of different reactions. I'm looking back; man I was so ignorant; I knew nothing about what I was getting into. I couldn't even articulate to them what I was getting into. I'm just like, "Yeah I'm going to boarding school, and I'll be living there." I didn't even have much to really tell them.

Bradley attended Westmont for four years, going on to receive several degrees from an Ivy League university.

Rey. Rey is a 40-year-old Latino male from a large city in the southwest. Rey is married with two children. He was introduced to boarding schools through the ABC program. Westmont was the only school Rey was matched with. He stated that his parents did not encourage him to attend Westmont, but that they would do nothing to prevent him from going:

Their disposition was one that they would have never said, "no you can't go," but they thought it was a joke and also weren't in a position to help me. A lot of it, deciding to go, putting together the application, doing anything that had to do with the application, was on me. All they could do was just asked me here and there how it's going today. They didn't help me, but they also weren't going to keep me from doing it.

Although it has been over twenty years, his sense of excitement regarding this opportunity to attend boarding school was still very evident:

I was like through the roof. I think first and foremost I probably was drawn to it

as an adventure, the idea of going somewhere away for four years and exploring, meeting different types of people. I saw it as an adventure, a way to college. I never really thought about college before applying. It was equivalent to winning the lottery, getting for free what other families were paying significant money for. My father left home at a similar age to continue his schooling, so that encouraged me to think that maybe I was meant to do the same.

Rey attended Westmont for four years, going on to receive a degree from an Ivy League university.

Aldo. Aldo, a 38-year-old Latino male, is the youngest participant to be interviewed. He is married with two children and hails from a suburb of a large east coast city. A computer engineer, Aldo is the only participant in the study that had two parents that attended boarding school (one in the United States, one in Central America). He and his parents visited several boarding schools before selecting Riverton. Aldo stated that his family moved on a regular basis and was looking forward to attending boarding school. Even though he wanted to attend and both his parents attended boarding school, Aldo stated that the experience was still intimidating. Aldo is soft-spoken and laid back as he describes the transition as:

...a little scary, to be honest. I was actually kind of young for my grade, too. I started when I was thirteen years old. It just seemed very, very big; the size just seemed a little intimidating, too, and just the several buildings. The idea that I would be on my own, I had to be navigating these buildings by myself, was a little strange. Also, you know, being from the city, it was different, obviously different in [rural] New England; it is a different landscape.

Aldo was also the only participant that did not make any mention of financial aid or a scholarship. Aldo spent four years at Riverton before attending and graduating from college.

Tomas. Tomas is a 42-year-old Puerto Rican male. He is married with a young son. Tomas was raised in a large east coast city and was introduced to Westmont by ABC. Although all of the participants in this project were eager to participate and discuss their experiences, there was something different about how Tomas described his experience. He expressed his attitude towards the boarding school experience as one of “escaping one environment while not being sure of where you are escaping to.” Of his home environment, Tomas stated that:

I wanted to leave, I had never really been out of my city too many times, and it is far different than it is now, my neighborhood was very poor. I had a sense that I wanted to get out to see a little bit of the world and give this school a shot.

He described the transition as somewhat sudden, the transition from one environment to the next effectively shocking the system. Of Westmont, he stated:

It’s a very different environment; it’s like one of those things where you don’t know what you don’t know. You just literally showed up and then it’s like, “Okay, what the fuck do I do now?” It was a trial by fire. It’s like throwing somebody in the deep end of the pool and seeing what happens.

He is both jovial and serious at the same time, willing to make fun of himself while describing his experience. When asked if he had the opportunity to visit Westmont before attending, he stated, “Naw, we just showed up like some crazy hillbillies. I didn’t even have shoes on.” Tomas was the only participant that attended boarding school with

his best friend from home (Frank). Tomas attended Westmont for four years, going on to receive a degree from an Ivy League college.

Table 2.

Demographics of the participants

Name	Age	Race	Occupation	Married	Kids	School	ABC*	Home	Degree
Paul	43	AA	Physician	Yes	2	Westmont	Yes	Midwest	M.D.
Joseph	44	AA	Finance	Divorced	0	Riverton	Yes	Midwest	MBA
Landon	42	AA	Finance	Yes	1	Westmont	Yes	Midwest	MBA
Lem	44	AA	Professor	Divorced	2	Westmont	Yes	N. East	Ph.D
Rafael	41	Latino	Corp. Strategist	Yes	2	Riverton	No	W. Coast	MBA
Edward	43	AA	Corp. Executive	Divorced	1	Westmont	Yes	Midwest	MBA
Carl	41	Latino	Consultant	No	0	Westmont	Yes	N. East	B.A.
Bradley	41	AA	Pub. Policy	Yes	1	Westmont	No	N. East	M.A.
Rey	40	Latino	Non-Profit	Yes	2	Westmont	Yes	South	MBA
Aldo	38	Latino	Engineer	Yes	2	Riverton	No	E. Coast	M.S.
Tomas	42	PR	Non-Profit	Yes	1	Westmont	Yes	N. East	B.S.

Note: ABC or similar program; Home = Pre-boarding school; Resides = Current home; AA=African American; Div =Divorced; PR = self-reported Puerto Rican

Lived Experiences

In response to the first research question, “How do African American and Latino graduates of boarding schools describe their boarding school experiences?” the participants in this study share many common experiences. Their most commonly shared experience began when they all left home at a young age to attend boarding school. For some, leaving home was seen as an adventure and an escape. Others struggled with adjusting to a new world and a new life.

Transitioning from Home.

Ten out of eleven of the participants mentioned that they arrived at their campuses early for what was described as a minority orientation program. The Riverton program was one week long while the program at Westmont ran for two weeks. The goal of the program was to allow for some time for students to get acclimated to campus life to smoothen the transition. The program included acclimating to dorm living, attending academic classes, establishing relationships with other students, and adjusting to the pace of the boarding school. Several of the participants mentioned they had never been away from home for any extended period of time with the exception of the occasional visit to grandparents or relatives. Lem recalls:

...getting used to just being away from our parents, because I don't think I've ever been away that long from my parents, on my own, other than visiting my grandma and my uncle in Virginia. While I was there, there was a lot of 'nerves.' It was really nerve-wracking but it was really cool to click with people.

In describing the minority orientation, Edward stated:

That was good because that gave me a chance to kind of like get my bearings before everybody got there and things got to rolling. Have some friends going in, such that you know, when school started, you didn't just feel like the new kid without any kind of peer group. You know many of these kids already knew each other and been around a while, or, you know, it was an expectation that they would be there. Where for me, there wasn't an expectation that I would be there. I wasn't probably ready for what was about to happen from day one, and I think that program kind of prepared me a little bit more than I would have been, had I

not done it.

The opportunity to get adjusted to the new environment was seen as beneficial. Aside from getting adjusted to the environment, the opportunity to establish relationships and develop friendships was paramount. Several participants mentioned that the friends they made during the orientation program became their best friends during their boarding school experiences and well beyond. Landon stated:

Many of those initial connections, during that orientation program, those are my same friends, my closest friends here to this day, really, over twenty-five years later. I arrived at Westmont in the fall of 1989, and, you know, twenty-five years later there's really kind of a core group of guys who I'm still very close to.

Tomas found the program to be valuable but also remembered the campus as being physically overwhelming.

You know, that was helpful, you know, to know some faces on campus, that was definitely an advantage to me, you know, because we got familiar with the place before all the kids came. So I thought that was very helpful for, you know, otherwise it wouldn't have been straight up, like a deer caught in the headlights.

The minority orientation program was usually reserved for the students that were introduced to boarding school via programs like ABC. Occasionally, international students would also be added to the program.

Navigating Two Worlds.

The participants described what it was like having to transition between two worlds. Several participants – Joseph, Aldo, and Rey – described the navigation with family as being seamless and nurturing, while others described the transition as awkward

and confusing. Lem described how he observed relationships changing:

I began to appreciate home a lot more. I know my relationship with my mom changed. I know that. The funny thing about my mom ... I'm not afraid to admit, I was a huge mama's boy. I was missing my mom a lot, but we always got into fights, and it seemed like we always got into fights to get over the fact that we're going to miss one another. It was almost like a scheduled thing where I'd get home, and we'd hug and we're, "Oh I miss you." "I miss you, too." By the time we're leaving it's just like, "You need to take your butt back to school."

Edward described his first trip home like it was still fresh on his mind:

That was like water, man. That was like to get my mouth on some good fried chicken, some greens and macaroni and cheese from my grandma, to see my family again. I didn't even realize, like, how much I loved them, how much I was a part of them, until I was away from them, or how much I needed them. But I came back telling them about all this stuff that was going on, and they were like, "Yeah, whatever kid." So it was good and bad at the same time; it was good that I was home back with them, but it was bad that, like, I didn't think that I could reach them and share this experience with them. I felt like I was just on this journey by myself at that point, where I thought I was doing it for all of us in some strange way. I thought that I was going to come home and be the messiah and take my family to another level, but, at the end of the day, I was the only person that was going to benefit from this or not. Everybody else was moving on, and that became apparent after subsequent visits home.

Edward viewed his departure for a better education as something that would benefit him

and his immediate family. His family did not fully share in his vision. Like Edward, the educational experience and change of environment had begun to change Rafael also. He stated:

It was weird, because I became more argumentative, not in a sense of rebellion, but more in a sense of showing my parents they were wrong on various silly things, like taking the highway versus surface to get to a certain location. With the education, I became much more of a critical thinker.

Tomas stated, “I think I missed a lot of my brothers growing up, my younger brothers. Those were some big years for them.” Rey stated that the early trips home were great, but as time passed, he experienced a similar distancing effect in his relationship with his family. He stated:

The trips home became harder. I think, overtime, as I began to change more, and also as the sort of the contrast between the school environment and the home environment became more apparent. I think those visits became harder to manage, just being able to reconcile everything.

Carl mostly remembers the desire to get back home to the friends he grew up with and was comfortable around. He wanted to return to what was comfortable and familiar. The reunion did not produce the outcomes that Carl desired:

I was dying to get home; I was dying to see my friends, and it was just different, even with my friends it was different. I felt already out of the loop. That little girlfriend I used to date, obviously moved on. Some of the guys started calling me a white boy, “You a white boy now,” so there was no one I could really relate to in my city anymore. I felt isolated there a little bit.

For those who struggled with the navigation between the two worlds, it did not matter if they were returning to school or returning home; there was a sense of awkwardness and displacement. That awkwardness remained until one of the two worlds won out. In most cases, school would become the eventual winner. Life at school represented progress and the potential for advancement. As Edward stated, home appeared to be stagnant. It was difficult to accept one world without neglecting the other. Tomas mentioned that one of the reasons he struggled with fully accepting life at Westmont, was because he knew he would have to return home at some point. Tomas stated:

I always knew that I was there [school] for seven or eight months of the year, but I always had to go back home. I needed to be able to negotiate that because, in a way, I found certain aspects of Westmont to be beautiful and idyllic, but I also felt like that wasn't my life.

Balancing both worlds was easier for the participants that were able to accept boarding school as a new part of their lives.

Difficulties and Barriers.

The participants spoke of their difficulties and barriers, often pausing to reflect. Maybe even gauging how much they were willing to say, or how to properly frame their responses. To a man, every participant mentioned going from the public school to the academic rigor of boarding school. Rafael discussed transitioning from his public school to the academically rigorous Riverton:

I reflect on that a lot. When I graduated from the junior high school back home, I was very good at math, and I was good at history. It turned out I wasn't good at math at all. As a matter of fact I flunked math; I was held back in pre-algebra. I

flunked algebra and was put back in pre-algebra, and I was going from a 3.8 GPA in junior high school to being placed on academic probation. You wouldn't know how to deal with that, I mean, up until that point. For learning how to deal with being at the bottom was something.

Bradley describes a similar experience stating:

I think probably the most significant [barrier] was academic preparedness. I thought I was prepared for Westmont when I arrived, kind of cocky, or a kind of know it all attitude, but I thought I had a really good push, having gone to a quality middle school, but it was really a bit of a rude awakening, how much I kind of had to study and hit the books just to, sometimes, you know, get a “B” or a “C” in the class.

Similarly, Carl was also accustomed to receiving high passing grades in his middle school, only to realize that things would be different at Westmont. He stated that:

Freshman year was, I have to say, the most difficult, and, honestly, it was the academics. I was a straight A student. That's not saying much in a junior high back home. Clearly, we're not up to par for most of these. Most of the kids at Westmont were already in Algebra 2, and their writing skills were advanced. I was behind in writing, was behind in Math; I was even behind in Spanish. It was crazy. I signed up for a Spanish class, thinking I was going to dominate that class, being that Spanish was my first language. No. I remember getting a “C” for my first grade in Spanish, and that was tough.

In regards to language, four of the participants, Carl, Rafael, Rey, & Tomas all mentioned that their accents, language, and culture further played a role in how they were

treated when they arrived at boarding school. These individuals also mentioned that Spanish was the preferred language in their home environments. Carl remembers:

...[my roommate] said I spoke funny; I had an accent; I said weird slang words...

They were tough; yeah, I had students who said I spoke funny; one time a student called me a spick. I definitely had kids making fun of where I was from – my family is from Columbia – making fun of drugs, coffee, making side comments.

Rafael recalls a similar experience. “It was different. It was different because my roommate said to me, ‘Why don't you learn English?’ That was a blow, because I've never had anyone say to me, ‘Why don't you learn English?’ That was a moment.” He went on to state, “I learned what it meant to be Latino when I went to Riverton, because you're the only one or one of a few.” Both he and Carl stated that they were founding members of support groups for Latino students at their respective schools. This was an experience that they both stated was beneficial as they transitioned to college. These two classmates in college were struggling with an issue that they both experienced in high school.

Social Isolation.

The participants went through the boarding school process with the intent of gaining more out of life than their home environments provided. Several of the participants mentioned that instead of being engaged and immersed in the boarding school culture, they felt isolated and often depressed. They spoke of time spent alone, lonely days leading to lonely weeks. They spoke of self-diagnosed depression, days in the campus counseling center, and nights alone. Having a source of support was critical to surviving for these students. Tomas, Joseph, and Aldo all lost a significant piece of

their support structures when close friends or roommates were removed from school.

Joseph was the head of the student disciplinary board when his best friend and roommate was expelled from school late in their academic careers at Riverton. Aldo's roommate was suspended during his sophomore year at Riverton.

Tomas had a much more difficult situation. Tomas and Frank were from the same hometown and were close friends prior to coming to Westmont. In describing his relationship with Frank back home, Tomas stated, "He wasn't somebody that I knew; he was somebody that I would hang out with every day.... We used to chill every day....It was almost like having a brother [at Westmont]." Once they got to Westmont, Tomas and Frank were like two twins speaking their own language. When together, they were able to be real, they were able to be themselves. They were inseparable both inside and outside of the classroom. The support that they provided one another was greater than any resource that Westmont could provide. Disciplinary infractions led to Frank being permanently removed from Westmont part way through his freshman year. His removal and absence had a profound effect on Tomas. Tomas reflected:

So, obviously, when my friend was kicked out, that was not a high point. There was a point when I, too, was suspended for a week. It was the beginning of sophomore year. My grades hadn't really picked up. They had gotten rid of my friend, and they were essentially going through a process of deciding whether or not I needed to stay there, or if was going to be successful there, and they had me go to, like, these counselors, and I found it kind of odd because the counselors were actually creating a report that would go back to the school saying if they thought I was making proper adjustments, and this, and for me, I felt like that was,

like, that was a really difficult period because I felt like I couldn't be honest with people. I said to myself, "Do I want to stay here or not?" Then, I said what I did to myself, "What am I going to have to do to stay here?" I had to convince these psychologists that I was making good adjustments, so there was really no problem.

Things were going well, and I felt that I needed to do that.

Others experienced their own issues of isolation. Edward reflects on one particular moment when he felt alone and isolated even though he was in a campus full of "peers":

So there were a lot of moments that I felt lonely on campus and but you just find ways to push through it. You sit in your room, you go down to the lobby, try to watch some TV, go to the weight room, play some basketball, do something, but, I mean, it was a lot of moments that I felt lonely, and a lot of that was my fault cause I couldn't figure out what was going on, and I had a lot of inner anger and animosity towards a lot of people.

It really didn't do anything to me, I don't think, looking back at it from my forty-three year-old self, but it just felt like it was only me, and I was hypersensitive to a lot of stuff.

When Edward stated that he could not "figure out what was going on," he was referring to how he didn't fully grasp how to navigate and thrive in his new environment. Failure to adjust or adapt can have serious impacts on health and success. Lem struggled with similar issues:

I can't remember if it was junior or senior year, but I remember just getting so angry. Then I just kind of blacked out. The only thing I remember are flashes of me throwing a chair and it breaking, and, then, taking the chair and smashing it

against the window, and, then, going back into my room. That was probably the point where I was like, “Man, I really need some help or something.”

He went on to discuss how this particular feeling was part of a much larger issue that he was dealing with at Westmont and beyond:

It was hard. It was really hard. I was at the point where, I realized in retrospect, I was clinically depressed. That wasn't diagnosed, because I ended up realizing I had problems with depression, particular after I got into college. No, I was clinically depressed then and was just undiagnosed. I used to go into the counselor every other day...for about two years.

The social isolation experienced by the young men directly impacted their ability to access and benefit from the social capital of the boarding school experience.

Race and Restraint.

Many of the young men interviewed were from inner city urban environments. They were from neighborhoods where you had to be tough just to get through an average day. In their previous schools, disagreements would escalate to physical altercations, even between friends. Once they arrived at their respective boarding school campuses, they had to show and embrace a level of restraint that they may not have been used to. This restraint had to be used especially when dealing with issues of race and racism. Joseph recollects his experience being elected as the first African American student body president at Riverton. The school was hosting a celebration ceremony, and he was not given the chance to deliver a speech at the engagement. Instead, they allowed the young man who lost the election to speak in his place. Joseph was given the task of presenting the benediction. To this day, he is still upset about how this transpired. Tomas discusses

the adjustment that he was required to make in regards to reacting to actions and comments in his new environment:

There were a few instances that I would consider racial, and I considered them racial back then. I just knew that, in order for me to stay there, the one thing I couldn't do was react in a violent way. To some extent I had to eat little slights here and there. People would say something funny, and you couldn't really react the way you wanted to.

In a similar vein, Carl describes his adjustment process, along with what he was and wasn't willing to tolerate. The environment was not going to adjust to him; he had to adjust to the new environment. Carl stated:

I created this persona, being tougher than I am, even though I was 5 feet, 100 pounds. I didn't want to let any of the older kids haze me. The dorm I was in was really known for hazing. I just acted crazy, and started acting out whenever they tried to come haze me, like lifting and swinging chairs, saying, "Nobody come in here."... It was weird because I didn't mind getting hazed by the students of color.

Lem's current view of and thoughts about potentially racist behavior is different now. He now views the events of his past through a different lens:

There are some things, in retrospect, I remember, interactions in different dorms where people were, in retrospect I say to myself, "You know, that may be kind of racist." The thing is, in the moment, I don't think I was thinking along those lines. In retrospect, the jokes that people would say, comments about where I grew up, things like that. Those are things, in retrospect, that I kind of say to myself, you

know, I think, “Today, if I were to hear that, somebody would have got knocked out.”

The “in retrospect” that Lem refers to could be described as a mental callous, a numbing of the impact of a painful or difficult situation caused by a combination of multiple negative experiences with racism, numbed by maturity and time. Several of the participants, who mentioned race or racism in their boarding school experiences, casually glossed over the impact and significance. The benefits received from attending boarding school, along with a mature perspective, both provide for a softening effect in regards to recollecting the events of the past. They have come to accept that the racism was just a part of the experience.

Factors Leading to Success

In response to the second research question, – *What factors do boarding school graduates perceive as contributing to their success?* – there were several common themes. Several of the men stated that the support of their family, especially their mothers, was key. The mothers were the ones holding the line, letting their young sons know that they needed to be strong and finish what they started. Bradley stated, “My mom, she was relentless. In large part, she sacrificed a lot herself in terms of her career, so she didn’t want us to make the same mistakes. I would not have made it without her.” Some participants mentioned the caring relationships with faculty or staff members were what made the difference. These relationships can be very important. In a boarding school environment, your math instructor also serves as your baseball coach, advisor, and dorm parent. Tomas, Paul, Landon, Bradley, and Edward all mentioned that being athletically proficient was a factor that led to their being able to navigate boarding school.

Playing sports was a way to bridge the perceived differences of race and class. Out of all the aids to success that were mentioned, there were three contributing factors shared by a majority of the participants: friendships, resilience, and the willingness to sacrifice in order to achieve something greater.

Friendships.

Friendships and social bonds were one of the most recurring items that the participants mentioned when asked about what helped them to successfully navigate boarding school. As previously stated by Carl and Landon, some of those friendships were forged as soon as they arrived on campus and have remained strong for over twenty years. Carl mentioned that he and his roommate from the orientation program are still close to this day. Landon and Bradley both described the strength of their bond of friendship twenty years later. Of his lifelong friendships, Bradley stated, “All those guys – weddings... We’ve shared child births together. I mean it’s...I mean, literally, those are, to this day, some of my best friends.” As Paul discussed his perspective of the bonding that took place, he described a bonding that took place around a common plight or a shared experience. He stated:

It wasn’t just that it was bonding; it was bonding with people who were very similar to you. It really helped to kind of form and forge my identity. Those guys were a huge help; it kind of helped you to help survive there.

He confessed that some of the individuals that he was close with in boarding school may not have been his friends under “normal” situations. He felt comfort and connection with these individuals due to their shared “other” experience.

Resilience & Sacrifice.

A major and consistent theme shared by a majority of the participants is a heightened level of resilience in overcoming the many obstacles placed in front of them. For Tomas, Rafael, Bradley, Edward, Lem, and Carl, just getting out of their home experiences was already a win in many ways. The strength needed to be able to successfully survive boarding school made these men exponentially stronger than they had been before they arrived. In discussing the type of individual that succeeds in boarding school, Edward stated, "It's not for everybody let me say that. You'd have to be driven in a way that you can float by yourself and have an inner confidence." This strength and confidence have served them well going forward. When asked how the boarding school experience had made him stronger, Tomas stated, "...man I could do four years in Alaska; I could do four years on Mars 'cause I did four years at Westmont." Rafael describes a situation when administrators at Riverton attempted to dismiss him and have him transfer to a different boarding school, but due to their politeness and his resilience, the dismissal did not stick. He remembered:

Because of my academic difficulty, it was decided that I was not going to go back. The administration decided that it was best if I did not return back for my junior year. They actually helped me and sponsored my application to get interviewed at Rocton Academy. They literally drove me to Rocton Academy to interview with them for admission because I would be "transferring."

Instead of accepting their polite offer to help him transfer, he kept showing up to summer events being held by Riverton. His persistence resulted in his scholarship being reinstated. Rafael went on to state, "When I compare myself with, like, men at my age

who did not have to struggle, it is actually a very, very sad state, because I ask, ‘How did you get through life if you don't know how to freaking overcome obstacles?’”

Although resolute and resilient, their time away from home came at a cost. There were sacrifices made. Tomas and Rey missed the opportunity to watch their younger brothers grow up. Rey discussed how he reconciled the opportunity. He looked at it as “embracing whatever happened and being open to new and different adventures and relationships because I think that allowed for anything to happen and made me focus less on what I was leaving behind.”

Joseph missed out on spending quality time with his father, who passed away a year after he graduated from Riverton. Paul’s parents divorced during his time at Westmont. This fact left him feeling that he didn’t really have a home to return to. He stated that, recently, his children asked to visit his childhood hometown. He was not sure how to reply to the request because he felt no connection with the place he was from. Although Bradley did not miss his home environment, he fully understood that going to Westmont created a wedge between him and his siblings. It has been over twenty years, and he feels that he is still rebuilding those fractured relationships. Essentially, Tomas lost his best friend and brother, Frank, while they were at Westmont. That loss is still hard for Tomas to think about:

When I think about what my friend Frank had to go through when it didn’t work out for him at Westmont, he had to go home for good, and it did not [work out]. Frank was a brilliant guy, and I don’t know that he finished high school. I think eventually I’d seen him some years later; I think he got his GED, but he essentially dropped out of high school, lost a lot of years.

Carl, Rafael, Joseph, and Edward also reminisce about friends that were lost to them due to their boarding school transition. Carl has a very realistic take on his loss and separation from his friends. He stated:

Let's be real. Some or most of my friends, not all of them, but I'd say ninety percent of them, did not end up doing well. If I missed out on anything, I missed out on getting in trouble a lot. I mean, it was in the late 80s, early 90s; home was really rough.

Of all who participated and all who sacrificed, there was not one who stated that they felt that the experience and the opportunity was not worth the sacrifice. Joseph stated that, "Every single success [in his life] has been due to being a Riverton graduate." Paul stated that one of the unintended things that Westmont taught him was not to get thrown off your base, especially when you constantly end up being the only person of color in the room. Paul stated, "You don't get as fazed by being the only person of color in a room; you don't get as intimidated in those situations." Rafael describes a toughness and real life lessons that were taught to him by Riverton that has increased his confidence. He stated that he "knows how to take a punch" and he learned this at Riverton.

Although all admit that they benefited tremendously from the boarding school experience, several reminisced on lost opportunities due to not fully embracing the experience. They did not feel that they fully capitalized on the life changing opportunity given to them at the age of fourteen. Edward described it as "the best opportunity I didn't take advantage of. I feel like an idiot. It was the perfect opportunity to explore everything that I ever wanted to know about anything." The reflection on the notion of "if I had a chance to do it all over again" speaks strongly to the participants

acknowledgement of the benefits of social capital. Edward, Carl, and several others mentioned that it was not until late in their boarding school careers when they realized the opportunity that was before them, the opportunity that they were missing out on. It wasn't too late to capitalize on some of the benefits, but it was too late to benefit fully.

Summary

Chapter four presented the common lived experiences and themes voiced by the eleven participants of this study. Those themes included transitioning between two very different environments, navigating and understanding barriers that included racism, and dealing with social isolation. Strong social networks established with classmates, along with resilience and sacrifice, led to these young men successfully navigating the environment to become successful adults.

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Introduction and Overview

The focus of this project was to study the lived experiences of African American and Latino male graduates of elite boarding schools. Chapter four presented the findings regarding the lived experiences of African American and Latino males in boarding schools. The chapter also details the factors that contributed to their success in high school and beyond. Chapter five begins with an overview of the findings and an analysis of the data. This is followed by answers to the two research questions and reflections of the researcher. The chapter concludes with implications for practitioners and suggestions for future research.

Since 1963, programs like A Better Chance have been providing the opportunity for high achieving minority students to have access to some of the most elite boarding schools in the nation. Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (1991) studied early graduates of the ABC program. The authors stated that the intended outcome of the program was to create a new class of individuals, a “new elite” (p.10). These individuals were a part of a groundbreaking social experiment conducted during a very trying time in our nation’s dire history.

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of eleven African American and Latino males two decades after their graduation from an elite boarding school. The goal was to understand how the participants successfully navigated the various challenges of attending boarding schools, including separation from their home environment, integration into their boarding school environment, and feelings of marginalization in both environments (Cookson & Persell,

1985).

The findings from this study are practical and applicable. Organizations like ABC and their partner institutions will be able to use this study's conclusion for a better understanding of the challenges this population faces during their time away from home, and how to best allocate resources to help them achieve their goals. This study also contributes to the ongoing discussion in the literature on how to assist underperforming African American and Latino males seeking secondary and post-secondary educational success.

Findings

Boys to Men

Growing up can be a pain
You're not a man until you come of age
We've given up our teenage years
In the effort to pursue our career
Who assumes responsibility
Of having to support our families
Who's protecting us from harm
Is there anyone around
That we can trust
(New Edition, 1988, Track 15)

The lyrics above are from New Edition's 1988 song Boys to Men. Through their lyrics, the performers of the song related to some of the experiences of the participants of the study. The song was performed by a group of African American men from the Boston area, which described their experience of leaving home and family at a very young age to pursue their music careers. The lyrics highlighted and shared some of the

feelings and emotions relayed by the participants in this study. There was a verse later in the song that stated, “Life’s responsibility falls in our hands.” This particular line speaks the truth and was relatable for the participants.

While I reflected on the conversations with the participants of this study, it became clear to me that their experiences in boarding school were about the intersection of many different variables at one crucial time in their lives. Their stories were all about time and place. Their realities were highlighted by three examples: Carl, who completed a last minute application at the request of his mother and was granted acceptance; Rey, who received a ride from his brother’s friend to attend the initial ABC informational meeting; and Paul, whose father took him on a road trip to visit boarding schools. The stories were also about the *who* and the *who else*: Edward, who hoped that his decision to leave home would benefit his entire extended family; Bradley, who left home as a part of his rite of passage; and Tomas, who was unfortunately separated from his best friend Frank.

It is rare when an individual is asked to make a decision that could change his life trajectory at such an early age. The decisions the participants made were for a chance at a better education. At the time, very few of the participants could understand let alone articulate the concept of access. For most, the idea of social capital was acknowledged only at a point later in their boarding school careers. Although all of the participants alluded to knowing the meaning of social capital, not one labeled the benefit as social capital. The academic barriers they experienced were enough to make the task insurmountable. They went from being the best students in the low achieving schools to a low achieving student in an academically rigorous environment. This realization was a

shock to the system, their pride, and their adjustment process. The socioeconomic barriers added an additional level of awkwardness and discomfort. Also, the financial instability of the participants' families made life more difficult. It was even more difficult when classmates knew the students' financial situations. Racial barriers were persistent and ever present in many forms: overt, covert, accidental, and intentional.

Based on the responses of the participants in this research project, they generally avoided discussing the traditional awkwardness and perils associated with being a teenager. When age was mentioned, the perspective of decision making and transitioning was noted, "We were only fourteen. What did we know?" The participants were very forthcoming in discussing what they saw as the value gained from their experiences as well as what they sacrificed. There were very few regrets associated with the participants' decisions. The majority of regrets stemmed from the feeling of not getting more out of the boarding school experience and not capitalizing on what was described as one of the greatest opportunities of their lives. This missed opportunity was often associated with a behavior of resistance and unwillingness to fully accept and adjust to the new environment. The resistant behavior, combined with the fear of having to, at some point, return to their home environment, led to additional social isolation.

Research Question One: *How do African American and Latino graduates of boarding schools describe their boarding school experiences?* The participants described the experience as powerful and life changing. It was described as a lost opportunity, social isolating, lonely, and depressing. It was described as an opportunity to find oneself, a voice, and an identity. The experience was described as a jumpstart on a very rigorous collegiate experience. Ironically, it was described as one of the most difficult

times in their lives and yet the easiest decision that they ever made.

Eight of the eleven participants went on to graduate from an Ivy League university. Three earned advanced degrees from an Ivy League university. Only three of the participants felt that they were fully immersed in the boarding school culture. The journey to full immersion was based on the individual's willingness and desire to become involved. There had to be a willingness to let go of the past to be able to embrace the future. If the other participants had understood the stakes, a full immersion might have taken place. There were some participants who believed they had been fully immersed. This belief is based on what they were willing to sacrifice and how much they were willing to let go.

Race and racism was viewed as just something that happened. In regard to it being a barrier, it was mentioned less than the academic rigor or the transitioning between environments. The participants didn't seem to focus on race and racism as a primary issue or barrier, but race and racism seemed to be ever present. Race was a factor that was just always in play. The only other concept that was always in play was the socioeconomic status. For the participants, boarding school was about the *haves* and the *have nots*. Their status was always placed front and center. This notion was evident in the classroom by not having ready access to books, in the dorms by witnessing roommates with high priced stereos and bedding, and in athletics by not being able to afford proper equipment.

Research Question Two: *What factors do boarding school graduates perceive as contributing to their success?* The factors that contributed to the graduates' success are grounded in their reasons for leaving home. Family encouragement and support

played a pivotal role. Each participant mentioned the role that one or both parents played in their decision to attend boarding school. The participants leaned toward the social bonds that were developed during their time away from home. These bonds were often formed with individuals from similar circumstances or situations, usually with others with “outsider” status (Anzaldúa, 2012; Datnow & Cooper, 1997). Although the participants gave credit to the family and social bonds as being crucial to their success, their stories and experiences spoke to underlying concepts of tenacity, resilience, and strength. Many of the participants spoke to the strength that they developed as a result of attending boarding school.

Researcher Positionality

Researcher positionality “refers to the social locations of the researcher and participants” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p.186). From the very beginning of this project, there were various aspects of my positionality that came into play. By being an alumni of the ABC program and a member of the cohort of participants being studied, I considered myself an insider. I had various levels of relationships with the participants. I had known some of the participants for over twenty-five years. Over the years, we had been classmates, teammates, mentors, and collegiate roommates. There were versions of their stories that I knew from personal experiences, but my perspective of events was slightly different. It was intriguing to hear differing accounts of their experiences that I remembered first hand. After I reviewed the transcripts of the interviews, I realized that there were moments when I was a boarding school student, when, although I was fully immersed, I was not being fully engaged. My shared history and experience with the participants occasionally led me to be less than fully challenging during the interviews

under the assumption that I already knew how they were going to answer the question. However, these instances were addressed by means of follow up conversations and through member checking. It was important to make sure to capture the full experiences of the participants.

Conceptual Framework

The study used Yosso's (2005) model of community cultural wealth to explore the lived experiences of African American and Latino males in the boarding school environment. Yosso (2005) challenges the traditional view of cultural capital that is narrowly defined by White, middle class values (p.77). The community cultural wealth model includes six forms of capital: (a) aspirational, (b) navigational, (c) social, (d) linguistic, (e) familial, and (f) resistant. For the participants in this study, the forms of capital are interwoven in a web-like fashion. One of the forms of capital intersects with two or three others to form the individual's completed concept of capital.

Familial capital may be taken for granted because family can be taken for granted. Family was the common thread that each participant mentioned, but rarely did they feel the need to voluntarily go into it in depth. Fathers were the ones who encouraged them to consider boarding school, while mothers provided the strength to continue when things got tough. Sibling relationships offered them their greatest regrets because these were the first of the valued relationships to be sacrificed. Extended family represented the relationships that were readily sacrificed as a result of advancement. Familial capital is "a commitment to community well-being [that] expands the concept of family to include a broader understanding of kinship." Familial capital is linked to social capital, which is an "establishment of networks of people and community resources," because

the social relationships established during the boarding school years are a new form of extended family. For the participants in this study, the social capital that they personally achieved through tight bonds of friendships with other outsiders may not be the goal as outlined at the outset of the ABC program, but closely matched with Yosso's definition of social capital.

Aspirational capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital are connected in the participants' development of resilience. Aspirational capital is the "ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers", which was part of the story of every participant at some point in the process. It could have been at the point of deciding to leave home to live in a foreign environment, or it could have been at a point when they considered return home. The aspirational intersects with the navigational, "maneuvering through social institutions... not created with Communities of Color in mind". It was a challenging task to maintain hope and aspiration while attempting to navigate in a world that was not created for them. The participants speak of a tempered sense of resistant capital, the "oppositional behavior that challenges inequality." As they were navigating and learning their environment, it was important for them to know when and how to resist and when and how to choose a different path.

Yosso describes linguistic capital as "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style". Although four of the five Latino participants discussed issues that surfaced in regards to either their accents or usage of the English language, there was a greater barrier that was evident in regards to linguistic capital. The greater struggles of the participants existed

with the language of wealth and privilege that resided within the boarding school environment. For example, Bradley stated that his definition of “vacation” was simply a time when you were not in school. The privileged students’ definition of vacation meant a trip to Vail for skiing or to Hilton Head for spring break. Carl and Edward struggled in conversations with classmates when discussing their parents’ occupations. The participants had not heard of money managers or civil engineers. It took time for the participants to learn the language of access, wealth, and privilege. Once they learned the language, they were better able to navigate the environment.

Table 4.

Participants' connection to Yosso's community cultural wealth model.

Yosso (2005) Forms of Capital		Participant Experience
Aspirational	The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers.	Hopes and aspirations directly tied to the decision to attend and complete boarding school.
Navigational	The skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind.	Participants regretted not mastering navigational skills earlier in their boarding school experience.
Social	The establishment of networks of people and community resources. These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions	Social networks developed mainly with other "outsiders" served as a great asset to the participants. As time passed and navigational capital was obtained, they were able to expand their social networks.
Linguistic	The intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style	Understanding the language of wealth and privilege was essential for the participants and assisted with obtaining navigational and eventual social capital.
Familial	Engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship.	Traditional family served as a support in the decision to leave and to complete. An expanded version of family was developed through strong social bonding.
Resistant	The knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality	Resistant and oppositional ideas and behaviors may have hindered the ability to access greater forms of social capital. Connected to idea of "self".

Implications for Practitioners

Practitioners on every level have something to gain from this information. First, a common bond or a common experience can improve the individuals' chances of successful completion. This has implications for elite boarding schools, public boarding

schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and graduate programs that are recruiting underrepresented students. Cohorts and learning communities have consistently proven to be successful. Where practitioners struggle is discovering where the balance is between a forced common experience and an organic common experience. At what point should relationships be forced for the sake of a beneficial outcome? Should individuals be allowed to explore and develop their own natural relationships if that means that limited support and marginalization will be the likely result? If the research shows that African American males in a residential learning environment, specifically for African American males, are more likely to graduate in four years than their peers who live in a more integrated learning environment, which option should be advanced? Does the segregation of a population for their success outweigh the disadvantages of a perception of segregation? At what point does benefitting a smaller group in need outweigh the needs of the larger population? It will be important for practitioners on all levels to be upfront and honest with their goals and desired outcomes. The desired outcomes should be what is best for the students. Students placed in an unfamiliar environment will benefit from the comfort of the presence of familiar faces. A prime example is the Minority Recruitment Program that participants discussed (now commonly referred to at my alma mater as the Transitions Program). This orientation program allowed the underrepresented students a period of adjustment and comfort. Several participants stated that they felt they would have continued to adjust at a faster rate had they been left in a comfortable environment as opposed to being spread out. This comfort leads to establishing strong navigational capital, which serves as a catalyst for other forms of capital.

In 2017, elite boarding schools have to decide how best to use their alumni from underrepresented groups. Several of the participants in this study made mention to the fact that the ABC student of today may be different than the ABC student of 1987. The cohort from 1965 could say the same of the cohort from 1987. Tomas mentioned that he does not believe that they are recruiting low-income kids from the south side of Chicago or East St. Louis anymore. He felt that the academic gaps along with the financial challenges made it a more difficult proposition. Carl and Bradley also alluded to the fact that they felt there were more kids from the suburbs, and no kids from the Bronx or Mattapan. With that being said, alumni can still serve as mentors and offer support to the younger generation of students, despite their differing backgrounds. Schools can and should sponsor gatherings for alumni of color. These events need to be held during the school year so that the current students and alumni can interact. Events of this nature also serve to strengthen alumni ties to the institutions. Underrepresented students bond across graduating classes. These events allow former dorm mates, mentors, and teammates to reconnect with one another and the school. These events also allow alumni who had negative experiences to reconnect with the school in a safe, welcoming environment.

Elite private boarding schools should be willing to share and learn from other institutions. Public boarding schools are currently struggling with issues that the elite boarding schools may have already solved. Sparks (2016) states that African American and Latino/a applications to the elite public boarding school – North Carolina School – were only about 15% of the total. Promoting capital is something the private schools have mastered. Other schools can learn from this.

There has to be a concerted effort to keep families involved and engaged in the learning process. Many of the participants in this study stated that their parents/families were on campus twice, once to drop them off and once for graduation. Every elite boarding school has a parents' weekend. These events need to be retooled to include and engage families that cannot afford to travel to campus.

Additional Research

This project only included the lived experiences of African American and Latino males from a specific cohort of students that graduated twenty to twenty-five years ago. It could be beneficial to hear the experiences and views of the participants at the five-, ten-, and fifteen-year marks. What role does time play in the perceptions of their experiences? Do the participants' views of their boarding school experience become more or less favorable with time? Comparing cohorts over time would be a difficult proposition. The original cohorts of students had to navigate a nation struggling with civil rights issues. The participants in this study left home environments affected by a national drug epidemic. A cohort five years removed could possibly speak of issues with technology, especially in regards to utilizing the communication aspect of staying connected with home.

Assumptions. At the beginning of this project, the researcher made the following assumptions regarding this study:

1. The completers will be able to recall their boarding school experiences.
2. Studying the lived experiences of this population will help future populations.

3. Attending boarding schools will have had positive influences and unintended detrimental consequences.
4. The participants will be willing to discuss the challenges that they faced, and continue to face, as a result of the unintended consequences.

After reviewing the responses from the surveys, interviews, and member checking, the researcher has concluded that assumption one, three, and four are accurate. There was very little reservation on the part of the participants to share their lived experiences.

Additional research should include further investigation of the lived experiences of African American and Latino women from the same cohort. The challenges and issues faced by women could be starkly different than those faced by men. Women may be willing to speak more freely about their experiences, challenges and barriers. At a minimum, it would be beneficial to inquire about research question two, *What factors do boarding school graduates perceive as contributing to their success?*, to see the similarities and difference in what females felt contributed to their success. It would also be beneficial to study African American and Latino/a day students and compare them with boarding students from the same cohort or institution. Do the day students' maintained connections with their homes improve their perceptions of the boarding school experience? Do day students and boarding students view forms of capital in different ways?

At the outset of this project, the researcher felt that there was a need for more in-depth research to be done regarding the Latino/a experience in the boarding school environment. The African American and Latino/a experiences are often intertwined. The

concept of a shared struggle is real, but there also needs to be an acknowledgment of the cultural differences that exist. When the experiences of both are combined, the Latino/a experience is often lost. Several additional research questions are: (1) “How do Latino/a graduates of boarding schools describe their boarding school experiences?” and (2) “What role did their Latino/a culture or heritage play in their boarding school experience?” As an outsider to the Latino/a culture, I would need further assistance in developing culturally relevant questions to get to the heart of the experiences of Latino/a students.

As the concept of public boarding schools continues to grow, it would be beneficial to research and compare how various forms of capital are viewed, obtained, and achieved at the differing institutions. It will also be important to study the trends in access to public elite boarding schools.

Appendix A

Study Number: 2016-01-0012

Approval Date: 02/26/2016, Exempt Status

Expires: 02/25/2017

Consent for Participation in Research

Title: The Lived Experiences of African American and Latino Males in Boarding School Environment

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about the lived experiences of African American and Latino male graduates of elite boarding schools.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey and an interview.

- Surveys will be distributed electronically.
- Interviews will be conducted via phone, Skype or Google chat.
- Interviews will be audio recorded
- This pilot project will include no more than six (6) participants.
- The survey and interview combined will take no longer than 2.5 hours to complete

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the larger study will add to the body of knowledge regarding African American and Latino males in various learning environments.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you

start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate, please send signed for to dkinney@austincc.edu. You will receive a copy of this form.

Will there be any compensation?

You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study?

Your privacy and the confidentiality of your data will be protected by removing all personally identifiable information. Data key codes will be stored securely by the research team.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for 2 years and then erased.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher Dorado Kinney at 720-244-7248 or send an email to dkinney@austincc.edu for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orisc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

If you agree to participate please email form to dkinney@austincc.edu.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

Print Name of Person obtaining consent

Date

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Appendix B

Amendment Summary Form Institutional Review Board

Note: This form is not required if the only change proposed is the addition or removal of research personnel. Submit the Research Personnel Form and online amendment application only.

IRB Protocol Number: **2016010012**

Protocol Title: **The Lived Experiences of African American and Latino Males in Boarding School Environment**

Principal Investigator: Dorado M. Kinney

Date: 6/20/2016

Provide a summary of the proposed modification(s). In the table below, describe the proposed change, the reason for the change, and where in the study document(s) they are located. Submit the affected documents in Microsoft Word (.doc) format and highlight the revised areas in yellow.

SUMMARY: Number of participants was increased, request to obtain waiver of documentation of informed consent was submitted

Proposed Modification(s)	Reason for Change	Document/Section/Page #
1. Number of participants was increased to 20	Pilot project expanded to full project	• Proposal, Participants, page 2, sec 6a
2. Focus group added	Desired additional data collection tool	Proposal, Procedures, page 1, section 4 Focus group protocol submitted
3. Request a Waiver of Documentation of Informed Consent	The study is minimal risk and the activities (survey, interview, focus group) do not require written consent outside of research context	• Proposal, Participants, page 2, sec 6f
4. Timeline	Extended to six months from approval	Proposal, procedures 4,c

Appendix C

Participant Survey Questions

Name
Age
Racial background
Boarding school attended
Years attended
Number of years attended?
College attended
Major
Year Graduated
Hometown (at the time you attended boarding school)
How would you describe the school you attended prior to boarding school?
Were you a part of the A Better Chance Program?
If not, how did you get introduced to boarding school?
Did you parents/family encourage you to attend boarding school?
Did you family give you any advice prior to leaving for boarding school?
Did you want to attend boarding school?
Why or why not?
What were your first impressions upon arriving on campus?
What did you like best about attending boarding school?
What did you like the least?
Did your parents/family visit you at boarding school?
How often?
How would you describe this experience?
What do you see as the greatest benefits for having attended boarding school?
What do you see as the greatest detriments for having attended boarding school?
Please feel free to add any additional information regarding your boarding school experience?
Would you be willing to be interviewed for this project?

Appendix D

Participant Interview Questions

Which boarding school did you attended?

How did you come about choosing this school?

Do you remember the process you had to go through?

When you found out you were accepted, how did you feel?

How did you tell your family and friends that you were going?

At the time of attending boarding school, what were your career aspirations?

Which career path did you end up on? Did boarding school help?

Talk about your first perceptions or interactions when you arrived on campus?

Who did you bond with and hang out with?

Who did you room with?

How did you feel about campus life?

Do you remember that first trip home from boarding school? How was it?

Did your view or perception of boarding school change as time passed?

Did you encounter barriers? How would you describe the major barriers?

Did you ever experience homesickness?

Did you ever think about leaving?

Tell me about the most difficult experience that you had while attending boarding school?

Do you think you benefited from attending boarding school?

Do you think that you missed out on anything by attending boarding school?

Do you feel that attending boarding school prepared you for college?

What three things would you say led to you completing boarding school?

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VITA

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